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THE RUNAWAY;

OR,

THE SEAT OF BENEVOLENCE.

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

By Mr. SMITH.

Somers, whom misfortunes had humbled till fate could not awe nor death diſmay, ſtood calm as a Chriſtian in the craſh of worlds.

VOL. III.

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THE RUNAWAY;

OR,

THE SEAT OF BENEVOLENCE.

CHAP. I.

EARLY on the enſuing morning, Auguſta ſet off in a poſt-chaiſe for London, accompanied by Ellen.

Sir Thomas remained with Sir Charles chief part of the day on which Auguſta left home; but pleading urgent buſineſs, he was allowed to depart.

Sir Charles, who was partial to ſociety, now felt his time hang heavy on his hands, nor could his domeſtic concerns afford

him any happineſs. He had been diſappointed in his favourite ſcheme reſpecting Edward, and had ſtrong reaſons to ſuſpect Auguſta had fixed her affection on an improper character.

This ſubject wholly occupied his thoughts; he wiſhed for ſome friend to whom he could unburthen his mind.

It being a family matter, he could not indulge himſelf by ſpeaking of it to any perſon excepting Somers, who had been unavoidably acquainted with theſe particulars.

After he had breakfaſted, on the following morning, he determined to viſit him, and relieve his ſpirits by communicating his ideas on the ſubject.

When he arrived at Cliffdown-lodge, a ſervant informed him his maſter was in the garden.

Somers,

Somers, as uſual, was ſpending a melancholy hour in the temple, and repairing the loſs of time occaſioned by the events of the preceding week.

Sir Charles, ſuſpecting as much, repaired to the ſpot, and ſtole ſoftly in without being obſerved.

Somers, at that time, had his eyes attentively fixed on the portraits.

In this attitude he ſat for ſome minutes, then, heaving a deep ſigh, exclaimed, "Oh! my heart!—when ſhall it find repoſe?"

"Never," cried Sir Charles, "while you thus perſevere in the indulgence of unavailing ſorrow."

Somers ſtarted on hearing his voice, and inſtantly roſe from his ſeat.

"I beg your pardon," reſumed Sir Charles, "for thus intruding on your

private meditations. If I had not conſidered you an object far too worthy to be loſt for the want of a friend, I ſhould not have attempted it. Let me therefore know from whence ariſes this melancholy, this ſelf-conſuming ſorrow; perhaps ſome plan may be deviſed to leſſen it; if not, I ſhould conceive, the participation of it would afford you ſome eaſe: at the ſame time, give me credit when I declare it is not from a motive of idle curioſity that I require it, but from a ſincere wiſh to ſerve you."

"I thank you," replied Somers, "and am confident your requeſt originates in a deſire to reſtore that peace of mind I have long been a ſtranger to; and although I am aware it does not lay in your power to render me any aſſiſtance, yet I will relate it to you, truſting you will

make

make large allowances for my weakneſs, as I am inclined to think you will imagine that which oppreſſes me has its origin in the fatality of my diſpoſition.

" You, perhaps, are prepared to expect a tale of amazing import; ſomething ſhocking to nature and unheard of: if that is the caſe, you will be diſappointed.

" My ſorrows ariſe from a conduct which is too frequently practiſed in this country; where riches is eſteemed the only or chief ſource of happineſs, and for which every connection, however valuable, is ſometimes ſacrificed.

" You are a father, and poſſibly the recital may have a good effect.

" At an early period of life I placed my attachment on the daughter of a Mr. Sternhold; and, but for ſome youthful

follies, which came to the knowledge of Louiſa, I ſhould have then married her.

" This placing an obſtacle in the way, ſhe refuſed me.

" Irritated by this refuſal, which I did not think my follies merited, I formed a connection with a lady of Louiſa's acquaintance.

" This lady, who was married, but ſeparated from her huſband, and who enjoyed an independent fortune left her by her father, was by no means inclined to live a life of celibacy; and I was far too amorouſly diſpoſed to refuſe her offer, but lived with her publicly.

" My motives for this conduct were chiefly theſe;—Previous to this ſtep, I acquainted Mrs. Sternhold of the propoſal I had received, who, doubting the intelligence, treated it with the utmoſt contempt;

tempt; alleging, that ſhe knew the perſon too well to ſuppoſe ſhe would adopt ſuch a line of conduct, and that I had flattered my vanity, or wiſhed to impoſe on her.

" This ſtung my pride, and prompted me to put it in practice.

" Another, and the more principal, motive was, becauſe I imagined myſelf ſlighted by Louiſa.

" This ſtep did not loſe me the friendſhip of Sternhold: I was ſtill a conſtant viſitor at his houſe, had frequent opportunities of converſing with his daughter, and ſoon found the ſpleen I had been exerciſing redounded equally on myſelf; as my affection for Louiſa was too firmly rooted to be done away.

" I likewiſe found myſelf diſgraced in the eye of the world, and ſhunned by the

female part of ſociety who had the ſmalleſt reſpect for their character.

"Having ſeen the error of my conduct, I endeavoured to rid myſelf of the connection I had ſo haſtily plunged into. I left my houſe, in which ſhe reſided, and gave out I was married; but this had no effect, for being teized by the parties Mrs. —— was acquainted with, I was, by their entreaties, and being of an eaſy diſpoſition, compelled to ſubmit.

"Mrs. Sternhold, who beheld my weakneſs, and who, I am poſitive, knew my attachment to Louiſa, frequently declared I muſt give up her acquaintance, or relinquiſh my connection with Mrs. ——. I ſaw there was no ſtep ſo likely to bring this about as my marriage.

"With this intent I removed Mrs. ——

from

from my houſe in the country to a ſmall houſe near town, alleging that I preferred ſpending the winter in London.

" Having accompliſhed this, I made propoſals of marriage to the Sternholds in behalf of their daughter; but was greatly ſurpriſed on meeting with a refuſal.

" This refuſal originated from an addition that was made to their fortune of an annuity which fell to them, ſubject to the life of a gentleman aged between ſixty and ſeventy.

" The annuity was far from being contemptible: they now conſidered their daughter a match for a perſon of ſuperior fortune to what I poſſeſſed; but as I had long been in the habit of intimacy with them, and, as I before obſerved,

they muſt have known the affection I had for their daughter at a time when, in point of income, I was their ſuperior, they did not think proper to ſtate this as their motive for refuſing me, but placed it to the account of the connection I had maintained with Mrs. ——.

" In addition to this refuſal I was deſired not to repeat my viſits.

" Louiſa, whoſe heart was then fixed on me, unable to ſuſtain this blow, was taken ill, which deprived me of meeting with her for ſome months; but having partly recovered, we eluded the vigilance of Sternhold, and were married.

" I now concluded that my happineſs was complete; but ſhortly found the reverſe.

" My eſtate was at that time mortgaged

gaged to a truſtee of Mrs. —— for a ſum of money that had been expended on improvements.

" Whether the mortgagee wanted his money, or was offended at my marriage, I cannot determine; but he waited on Sternhold without my knowledge, requeſting him to advance the ſum and take the mortgage on himſelf.

" This was refuſed; the mortgagee foreclоſed, and, by improper means, through ſecurities I had entruſted to him, obtained poſſeſſion of the eſtate: to recover it, I commenced a ſuit in chancery, which drained my purſe.

" The event was, that the mortgagee was compelled to ſurrender up the eſtate in ſix months, upon my paying off the ſum.

" During this period I had permitted

Louiſa, who had a ſtrong affection for her parents, to viſit them daily; but they abſolutely refuſed to ſee me, taking advantage of every misfortune that befel me to inculcate in her mind the neceſſity there was for her leaving me: and, in order to bring this about, they concluded it would be expedient, firſt, to leſſen her attachment; as ſuch they averred that fortune was my chief inducement in marrying her, and repreſented the occurrences which had taken place ſince that period as corroborative proofs:—that, if I had a ſincere regard, I ſhould not have taken her under my circumſtances:—that I was actuated by the hope of gain, a deſire to poſſeſs her perſon, and likewiſe to be revenged on them for their refuſal.

" Now, although Sternhold, if he had parted with every thing he poſſeſſed at the

the time I married his daughter, could not have purchaſed the eſtate which I relinquiſhed with Mrs. ——, yet did Louiſa pay great attention to theſe ſpecious arguments, and frequently profeſſed to be of the ſame opinion.

" This conduct deſtroyed our domeſtic felicity; and as I found it would be impoſſible to enjoy happineſs while they had an opportunity of thus poiſoning her mind, I determined to ſell my eſtate, pay the mortgage, and leave England.

" At this juncture, Sternhold offered to transfer the mortgage to himſelf.

" This offer on his part led me to conceive that all animoſity would ceaſe; I therefore gave up my plan of leaving England.

" Misfortune ſtill purſued me. The title to my eſtate was diſputed; the event was,

was, that I loſt it; and Sternhold's mortgage becoming of no value, he required a warrant of attorney for the ſum, which at his requeſt I executed.

" During this period Louiſa brought me a daughter, the image of herſelf; to this child the Sternholds were extremely partial; but not all their partiality to it was able to remove their fixed inveteracy againſt its father.

" They now with ſafety, having a bond ſuſpended over my head, inculcated to Louiſa the neceſſity there was for a final ſeparation; called to her mind the various misfortunes I had met with, and laid them down as ſo many proofs of my guilt:—repreſented me as a monſter not fit to live; a villain, who had grafted my poverty on their family; and even ſo far did their unchriſtian-like hate carry them,

that

that they declared to Louiſa ſhe was looked upon as little better than a proſtitute for living with me, in conſequence of the connection I had formerly had with Mrs. ——; for that my living with her a length of time had made her little leſs than my wife. As if that, or any other act of mine, could make me the huſband of another man's wife who had not been divorced.

" This language, on their part, evidently leſſened Louiſa's affection for me.

" I now ſaw that ſhe was never ſo happy as when abſent from me. As ſoon as ſhe had finiſhed her breakfaſt, ſhe viſited them, and remained from me the whole of the day, not returning till the evening.

" I remonſtrated on this practice; but ſhe pleaded as an excuſe, that the comforts I had now to afford her were not equivalent

equivalent to what ſhe met at her father's, and that, if I had the ſincere affection I profeſſed, I ſhould not wiſh to deprive her of them.

" This argument I conſidered as trifling, well knowing I ſhould not act upon ſuch a principle by her, if our ſituations were reverſed.

" The evil ſtill continued, and not contented with ſpending the day, ſhe took all opportunities of ſleeping there.

" I could not but ſee this change in her conduct with regret, and when I reminded her of it, ſhe fled to the arguments of her parents for refuge, and ſtrongly inſiſted there was no affection on my ſide.

" Unhappily this neglect with which I was treated rouſed a ſpirit of jealouſy in me.

" I had been taught that, for the huſband

band the wife ſhould leave the father and the mother, and, forſaking all others, cleave to him alone. This led me to conclude, an affection for them, in preference to her huſband, was inconſiſtent with nature; and that the ſtrong faſcination which led her always there, muſt have owed its origin to ſome other ſource.

" Having ſuffered this idea to take full poſſeſſion of me, it effectually deſtroyed my peace of mind.

" I knew that, when there, ſhe could write letters and receive anſwers; ſhe could make appointments, and could fulfil them.

" If I met her walking, ſhe could ſay ſhe was going to purchaſe ſomething for her mother;—if ſhe were aſked by her parents where ſhe had been, ſhe could reply, on buſineſs of her own; and they, concluding

concluding it was on my account, would not inveſtigate it further.

" I knew her parents had that confidence in her, ſhe could take the utmoſt latitude without ſuſpicion, and it would be impoſſible for me to detect it, as I was not permitted to enter their houſe.

" When I ſtated theſe my doubts, ſhe again declared it was a ſtrong proof I had no affection for her, otherwiſe I ſhould place in her unlimited confidence.

" This my jealouſy would not permit me to do; and as her conſtant abſence gave ſtrong proof of her want of affection, ſo did it increaſe my ſuſpicions.

" I will leave you to judge," continued Somers, " what muſt have been the feeling of a jealous man, when, paſſing their houſe, he ſaw one officer or young gentleman walk in, or another go out; knew his

his wife was there, and durſt not be of the party!—Then, at their next meeting, hear his wife beſtowing extravagant encomiums on this perſon or that:—'twas hell itſelf!

"Tired of the ſcene, and not daring to alter it, I ſubmitted to her remaining there, while, for the relief of my mind, I went into the country. But ſtill, ſuch was the force of my attachment, I could not exiſt happy without her, and therefore returned.

"I then propoſed for her to live with me again.

"She, in reply, recapitulated all the poiſonous doctrines laid down by the Sternholds; ſtated, that it was not in my power to afford her thoſe comforts ſhe met with at her father's; and, finally, declared, if I offered to remove her, ſhe would

would prevail upon her father to put the warrant of attorney in force againſt me.

" Staggered by this declaration, which at once unfolded to me her want of affection, I knew not what to do; but lingered near the houſe in which all my hope of happineſs was centered, and ſubmitted to ſeeing her occaſionally.

" Time gave me opportunity for reflection.

" I was miſerable; but began to inveſtigate the cauſe from whence this miſery originated, and found that it had its origin in my affection for her.

" The only ſtep then left me to purſue was, to extract this fatal paſſion from my heart. Then would her inveterate parents no longer have the power to puniſh me by torturing my feelings; as all the deſire I ever could have had to enter their houſe

houſe was on account of Louiſa, whoſe viſits I was not able to prevent.

" If I could once forget her, that deſire would of courſe ceaſe, as likewiſe would my jealouſy and anxiety on her account: therefore, like the wretch who, driven to deſpair, plunges a dagger into his heart, ſo did I forcibly tear myſelf away, and put it out of my power to receive her occaſional viſits, by quitting London.

" Fortune, as if tired of perſecuting me, now partly relented.

" I once more came into the poſſeſſion of a handſome fortune through the bequeſt of a friend, and immediately fled to this ſpot, with the hope of conquering an attachment that has been of fourteen years' duration."

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

"WHAT occaſion," ſaid Sir Charles, "is there to conquer your attachment, now you have the power of reſcuing your wife from her ſituation, and obliging her to live with you?"

"There," reſumed Somers, "I conſidered you would blame me; but I will ſtate my reaſons for not adopting ſuch a plan.

"I love Louiſa with far too great ſincerity ever to ſee her more. This expreſſion, which may appear ſtrange, and ſeems to carry a contradiction with it, is no more ſtrange than true.

"It was not her perſon, but her affections I courted, and wiſhed to keep.

"It

" It was from that ſource I expected to derive happineſs.

" Can I ever forget that ſhe neglected me, inſulted me, and forſook me in adverſity? And, if I cannot, is it poſſible I can ever eſteem her, or receive that happineſs in her ſociety that I otherwiſe ſhould?"

" I concluded," rejoined Sir Charles, " that your nature had been more forgiving. Is it poſſible that you, who can pardon a ſtranger, and follow that forgiveneſs with pity and aſſiſtance, yet refuſe to overlook the miſconduct of her who is, and ought to be, dearer to you than all the world?"

" Heaven knows," replied Somers, " I cannot harbour reſentment againſt her; and from my heart I pardon every impropriety of conduct in her; but ſtill the compa-

compariſon you bring is not a good one: I can forgive and aſſiſt a ſtranger, even although he ſhould have attempted to take my life; yet I could not take him to my heart, love him, and give to him my unbounded eſteem. Neither can I do thus by Louiſa; although I ſhall readily admit there are ſome circumſtances that plead in palliation of her offence; but nothing can obliterate it. The principal reaſon is, that ſhe was taught by her parents to deſpiſe me; this naturally compels me to inveſtigate their conduct.

"Whatever might have been my purſuits before I married, yet that act, having made her mine, ought to have ſilenced their tongues reſpecting me.

"There is no engagement on earth ſo ſacred as that which exiſts between a man and his wife.

"I am

" I am of opinion, that the man who by baſe inſinuations robs me of the affections of a virtuous partner, is worſe than he who robs me on the highway, or plunders my houſe of all I am worth; who, dictated by malice, plunges a dagger into my heart; or who debauches the perſon of my wife.

" He who robs me on the highway, or plunders my houſe of all I am worth, only takes my bread; a loſs that is lightly borne when I have a tender partner to ſhare it with me, and to comfort me under my misfortune.

" The means of living are always open, and a thouſand opportunities offer by which I can recruit my purſe; but who can regain the loſt affections of a wife? and, if they could, how can I ever forget that they were loſt, and the treat-

ment I was neceſſitated to meet with during that period?

" He that plunges a dagger in my heart, performs an act of kindneſs, compared with the other, by ridding me in a moment of that exiſtence which becomes a torture under the circumſtances in which I labour.

" And he that debauches the perſon of my wife, renders her loathſome to me, and thereby enables me to bear her loſs with greater fortitude.

" If, therefore, it is a crime to eſtrange the affections of a wife, how much greater muſt that crime be, when exerciſed by parents whoſe duty it is to inculcate affection? And how much greater ſtill muſt it be, when they take advantage of the huſband's misfortunes to put ſuch a deſign in practice?

" If

" If I ſaw a poor wretch ſtruck to the ground with ſorrow, would it not be doubly cruel in me to deprive him of the only comfort he had left?

" Such a conduct is repugnant to human nature.

" There is ſo great a degree of wanton cruelty in it, that I know not how it is poſſible any perſon could adopt it.

" It is a coward's blow, and wondrouſly diſgraces the author.

" If I entruſt my wife in the company of her parents, am I, in return, to conclude that they, for the felicity I allot them by the pleaſure of her ſociety, will take advantage of my abſence to rob me of all hope of happineſs in this world? I will draw a compariſon; if I were to lend you a property that was abſolutely mine, and what I eſteemed more

than my life, would it not be infamous in you, becauſe you had a fancy for it, to deprive me of its poſſeſſion?

" I remember well, when I ſtood indebted to Sternhold, a debt for which I was accountable to misfortune only, he, to blacken my character, declared I had robbed him of the ſum he lent me.

" It was a baſe inſinuation; but what has he robbed me of? more than my life! ſince thus my time muſt wear away in inconceivable torture, till grief, too mighty to be borne, ſhall burſt my heart-ſtrings, and reſtore my ſoul to its Creator.

" When I have thought concerning the cruelty of their conduct, I have been apt to arraign the juſtice of Heaven.

" They who can bend their knee in methodiſtic ardour, and pray that God would forgive them their treſpaſſes as they

they forgive thoſe who treſpaſs againſt them; or, as an elegant author expreſſes it,

'That mercy I to others ſhew,
'That mercy ſhew to me;'

and thus with ſolemn farce mock the Deity; I have wondered that his Providence has not perplexed them in their fortune, diſgraced them in their family, and afflicted them in their perſons: for how can they expect happineſs themſelves, who deal out miſery ſo wantonly to others?

"Look yonder," continued Somers, (pointing to the portraits); "there behold the woman that I loved.—Almighty God!—how much—what would I not give—to what degree of beggary would I not ſubmit to be reduced, if ſhe could

be returned to my arms with the affection ſhe once poſſeſſed; but which they, through an inveteracy that would diſgrace a ſavage, have deprived me of!

"There too behold my child!—Afflicting, maddening idea!—that child muſt be brought up to deſpiſe its father!

"Here are Sternhold's letters to his daughter; read how he warns her againſt crediting the affections of her huſband; ſee how he guards her againſt my hypocriſy, my artful wiles!—Now caſt your eyes on me, reduced through grief to a ſkeleton; my eyes ſunk in my head, and excruciating ſorrow preying upon my exiſtence; then judge of my art and my hypocriſy!"

"Mr. Somers," rejoined Sir Charles, "you ſuffer the recollection of theſe events

events to wound you too deeply; you have been unfortunate, and they have taken advantage of it."

"I have certainly been unfortunate," reſumed Somers; "but I am not of opinion there is ſuch a deity as Fortune, ſtanding blindfold on a wheel; or that the world is governed by chance. He who cauſes fortune is our Creator: is it therefore becauſe Providence viſits us with misfortune, that others ſhould take advantage of it by adding to it?

"It was their duty, as human beings, independent of relationſhip, to have ſoftened the hours of ſorrow, and not to have aggravated them.

"If they thought I lacked of virtue, then I needed their advice the more, and their doors ſhould have been open to me,

that I might have profited by precept and example.

" If, on the other hand, they thought me virtuous, and that all their treatment, however cruel, could not drive me into error, then was their conduct wrong in taking advantage of my virtue, for the practice of their own vice.

" But they are touched with methodism, and buoy themselves up with the enthusiastic hope that all is right; that they are the elect of God, and that his Spirit has taken possession of their hearts: as if it were possible that the pure Spirit of God could take up its residence where foul inveteracy dwells; or could dictate to them a conduct that would disgrace a fiend.

" He that locks up another in an iron

cage,

cage, and leaves him to ſtarve for the want of food, is merciful when compared with him who lives in the act of perpetual murder, by conſtantly wringing the heart and torturing the feelings of of his devoted victim, till he gluts his eyes by beholding him ſinking into his grave.

" A parent has a right to adviſe his child; but not to hate, deſpiſe, and abandon her huſband. Here the laws of God intervene, and denounce eternal curſes on thoſe who attempt it, without exception: and if they plead, in palliation of their crime, that they conſidered me worthy of ſuch treatment, what ſhall I then think of a worm of earth, puffed up with monſtrous pride, thus venturing to lend his puny aſſiſtance to his Creator; as if he were incapable of puniſhing, or of ſe-

parating thoſe whom he has ſtrictly forbid man to ſeparate?

"But what will not pride dictate to mortals, ſince it is univerſally allowed it owes its origin to ignorance?"

"Mr. Somers," ſaid Sir Charles, "however the mind of your wife may be debauched, or however her affections may have been eſtranged from you, ſtill this does not attach to your child; ſhe knows not that her mother has broken her marriage vow by forſaking you. I ſhould preſume you ought to ſend for her. Her company will enliven your ſpirits, and make you better able to bear your lot."

"Worſe, worſe!" exclaimed Somers: "can I view the child, and not think of its mother?—impoſſible! And ſo much do I abhor the deteſtable vice they have been guilty of, that I could not perform

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an action wherein a trait of their conduct appeared.

" Would you have me drag the infant from its mother, as they have torn it from its father?—or would you have me purſue a plan that would force Louiſa to this place?—No.—If a ſenſe of the duty ſhe owes to God and to her huſband—if the recollection of her ſacred oath at the altar, by which ſhe vowed eternal truth and conſtancy—but, more than all, if affection will not bring her hither, I never deſire her company; nor will I obtain it by other means."

" You are the beſt judge of your own feelings," rejoined Sir Charles, " and muſt act accordingly.

" Sternholds have much to anſwer for. God forbid there ſhould be many ſuch characters in exiſtence: if there were,

all confidence between a man and his wife muſt be done away, and the order of nature totally reverſed."

"And yet," reſumed Somers, "nine out of ten applaud their conduct: there are few fathers, ſay they, who act as Mr. Sternhold; although his daughter married without his conſent, yet, when the man could not ſupport her equal to his expectations, he took her back again with her child.

"Thus argue thoſe who do not examine the merits of the caſe.

"The fact is, Sternhold, taking advantage of my misfortunes, in addition to improper advice, held out his houſe as a lure to draw her from me, where ſhe could live in a ſtyle ſuperior to what I could then procure her.

"If he conſidered I had not the means

of

of providing for her equal to his wiſhes, then ſhould he have requeſted my company with her; for the intereſt of married people cannot be ſeparated.

" In reply to this he argues, that a man has an undoubted right to do what he pleaſes with his fortune.

" I aſſert the contrary. Providence never bleſſed an individual with ſuperabundance to afford him the means of ſeparating a man from his wife.

" As well might I make uſe of my fortune in drawing a wife from her duty, and hire a man to aſſaſſinate her huſband. Here follows the compariſon: my Louiſa is as completely eſtranged from me as if ſhe had embraced a vicious courſe, and I am dying daily.

" Neither was the conduct of Sternhold the reſult of a grounded affection for his

his daughter; that affection was not equal to his inveteracy againſt me. If it were, he would have given it up for the purpoſe of rendering his child happy; unleſs it be allowed, that a wife can be ſatisfied in ſeeing her huſband treated with contempt."

"I ſee how it is," rejoined Sir Charles; "their conduct towards their daughter was merely ſelf-love; her ſociety yielded them happineſs. The ſame as I might take a fancy to a favourite bird, which I deprived of liberty for my own gratification. If their affection had been real, they would have ſtudied her peace of mind; but they, preferring their malice to every other conſideration, have made their regard a pretext to carry their execrable deſigns into execution; well knowing they could not wound you more ſenſibly

ſibly than by depriving you of her. But yet, Somers, there may be ſome palliation: you, perhaps, have been extravagant and profligate; or have been given to drinking or gaming."

"No, no!" reſumed Somers; "I was frugal to the confiſcation of a ſhilling.

"Drunkenneſs I abhor; and as to gaming, I never ventured a guinea of my own property, or that of another's, in the exerciſe of it. My bittereſt enemy cannot accuſe me of practiſing either of them."

"I have heard your recital," rejoined Sir Charles, "with horror: you have been infamouſly abuſed, and treated with a degree of cruelty that reflects diſgrace upon the authors. The day of retribution will come, when this muſt be retorted on themſelves. In the mean time, let me adviſe you to deſtroy thoſe portraits, burn the

the letters that keep alive the recollection of theſe events; determine to be happy, and dedicate this temple to mirth, inſtead of ſolitude."

"Ah! Sir Charles!" replied Somers, "it is eaſier to dictate than to put in practice. An attachment of ſo many years' duration, ſo firmly rooted as mine, is not ſpeedily, if ever, to be eradicated."

"Try then another experiment," reſumed Sir Charles. "Since they eſtimate a man according to the fortune he poſſeſſes, yours is now different to what it was; they will no longer perpetuate their reſentment, ſince you have the means of exiſtence ſo amply in your power. Viſit them, endeavour to convince them of their error, and conciliate their eſteem. Louiſa, who has placed too implicit a confidence in all they have advanced, will

then

then be compelled to think and act differently; and when her parents see the error of their conduct, she will also see the error of hers; and happiness by this means may be once more restored to you. You are not of a disposition to refuse a repentant wife, who supplicates forgiveness for the past."

"You have truly pourtrayed my disposition," resumed Somers: "in fact, I would rather be the party that should ask forgiveness, than witness the humility of the supplicant while he asked it: but I can never visit them with any prospect of success.

"They have asserted and maintained the grossest falshoods respecting me; and I, in return, have asserted what they, for the support of false pride, have contradicted. If they were to consent to my visits,

viſits, all parties would be preſent, circumſtances would be brought to light, which ſooner than they could ſubmit to, they will carry their inveterate hatred to the grave."

"Why, then," rejoined Sir Charles, "there is no redreſs to be expected from them.

"I have frequently met with thoſe characters, who, having ſprung from nothing, feel their advancement in life the more forcibly. They recollect the ſcenes of humility they have paſſed through, and think they have an undoubted right to exerciſe a haughtineſs of carriage to every one they are acquainted with; thus rendering themſelves contemptible in the eyes of their ſuperiors, and deſpiſed by thoſe who, from intereſted motives, court their favour.

"If,

" If, therefore, any redreſs is to be obtained, it muſt be your own act. Permit me to ſay, that, as a man and a chriſtian, your conduct is wrong.

" You have maintained, and very juſtly, that for the huſband a wife ſhall leave her father and mother, and cleave to him alone, but you ſeem to forget this equally attaches to you.

" You are now by nature appointed her guardian and protector, and have, through fortuitous circumſtances, permitted her to remain with thoſe who had poiſoned her mind and leſſened her affections.

" You ſhould remember that you did not marry an angel, but a mortal, and large allowances ſhould be made when you conſider it was the voice of a parent ſhe liſtened to.

" It

"It is now your duty to take her from thoſe who have thus contaminated her principles, and place her with yourſelf, where, by tenderneſs and affection exerciſed on your part, ſhe may regain that affection which ſhe has loſt.

"What am I to think of a man whoſe goodneſs of heart prompts him to intereſt himſelf in the welfare of every individual, by convincing them of their error, and yet refuſes to perform this to the woman whom God and nature has entruſted to his care; but prefers rather to leave her with thoſe who injure her principles, and lead her aſtray from the paths of duty?

"Believe me, however ſhe may have erred heretofore, it is you that will be accountable hereafter, for her perſevering in this conduct."

Somers

Somers appeared thoughtful; he had never before viewed it in this light, but every word of Sir Charles's carried conviction to his ſenſes. After a conſiderable pauſe, he at length requeſted Sir Charles would ſtate what was the moſt eligible plan for him to purſue.

"Have you," ſaid Sir Charles, "any idea that ſhe has deſcended to the one vice a huſband cannot overlook?"

"No, really," replied Somers; "whatever my jealouſy might once have taught me to ſuſpect, yet in my more cool moments, I feel inclined perfectly to acquit her of ſo abominable a practice."

"Then," reſumed Sir Charles, "take your pen, and write an order for me to bring her; ſhe is your property, and I will have her and the child, or fetch away the houſe with me."

"I will

" I will ſeriouſly conſider of your advice," returned Somers, " and ſhall moſt probably put it in practice; yet in an affair of this nature, which ſo materially concerns my future happineſs, permit me a few days to determine on it."

" Granted," replied Sir Charles; " but if you then ſhould waver in your reſolution, I poſitively will go without your written order, declare I have a verbal one, and inſiſt on her accompanying me. You ſhall not thus become a prey to ſorrow, while it lays in your own power to alleviate it. It muſt be allowed you are wonderfully kind, in ſacrificing your peace of mind, and perhaps ſhortening your life, in order to render happy the bittereſt enemies both you and Mrs. Somers have in exiſtance—the Sternholds."

" I ſee it," rejoined Somers, " and am ſincerely

ſincerely thankful to you for this morning's viſit.

" Be aſſured, as ſoon as I have got my houſe in readineſs for her reception, I will put your plan in practice."

" That is well ſaid," exclaimed Sir Charles, ſtarting up and taking hold of his hand; " now leave this ſpot, this temple of ſolitude, and let us adjourn where we may diſcourſe on other ſubjects."

Somers obeyed; and Sir Charles, locking the door, took poſſeſſion of the key, at the ſame time obſerving he ſhould not put it in his power to relapſe by peruſing a parcel of trumpery letters.

" I ſhall," continued he, " give this key to Mrs. Somers."

" I ſub-

"I submit," replied Somers, smiling, and left the place with a countenance far different to what he hitherto had done.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

THEY now repaired to the houſe, where Sir Charles acquainted him with his intention of beſtowing Auguſta on Sir Thomas; which intention, he added, he ſhould put in practice as early as poſſible, ſince he feared ſhe had fixed her attachment on Theodore.

Somers ſaid all he could, in return, to diſſuade him from ſuch an attempt; laid down Sir Thomas as an improper character, and unworthy of being allied to ſo amiable a girl as Auguſta: while, on the other hand, he pourtrayed Theodore as a mirror of perfection; combated with force all the arguments that had been uſed

againſt him, and ſtrongly inſiſted, from his obſervation and ſome hints which had been dropped by the meſſenger from London, as likewiſe by Theodore, that he could prove himſelf upon an equality with his daughter. This produced a long argument between Somers and Sir Charles, which I ſhall leave them to decide, while I attend to Auguſta.

She left her father's, attended by her ſervant Ellen, on the preceding morning, and travelled poſt till ſhe reached a ſmall town, called Maidenhead, about twenty-ſix miles from London, on the Bath road.

At this place Auguſta intended ſleeping, not thinking it ſafe to purſue her journey further that day, as the evening would approach before ſhe could reach town.

They

They alighted at an inn, and were conducted to a ſpacious room.

Auguſta objected to its ſize, the afternoon being rather cold; ſhe requeſted to be put in a ſmall room, and to have a fire.

The ſervant replied, that ſhe would get ſuch an apartment ready for her.

Ellen followed the ſervant, that ſhe might have an opportunity of viewing it.

The ſervant informed her there was a room would exactly ſuit the lady, but which was at preſent occupied by ſome perſons who had arrived in a returned chaiſe, and that ſhe would requeſt them to accept of another apartment.

Ellen therefore waited in the paſſage while the ſervant went into the room for that purpoſe.

The requeſt was complied with, and the party left the room.

No ſooner did Ellen perceive them, than ſhe ran to Auguſta in great agitation.

"My dear madam," ſaid ſhe, "compoſe yourſelf; I am ſure what I have to tell you will require all your fortitude."

"Good Heaven!" cried Auguſta, "what has happened? or what have you to relate?—Do not keep me in ſuſpenſe, but let me know this inſtant."

"I have ſeen Mr. Theodore," replied Ellen; "he is now in the houſe."

"You ſurpriſe me," returned Auguſta, while her face vied with the damaſk roſe: "how unhappy have I made myſelf through my idle fears for his ſafety!

"Do you think he ſaw us arrive?" continued ſhe. "I am in ſo much agitation,

tation, I know not what to do!—I muſt ſee him; but perhaps he will leave the houſe without giving me an opportunity of ſpeaking with him."

"That I am confident he would do," rejoined Ellen, "if he knew you were here. He would be aſhamed to look you in the face. Believe me, madam, Theodore is a villain!"

"A villain!" cried Auguſta. "Are you aware how you wound my feelings, by coupling the name of villain and Theodore together? You have heard the malicious reports raiſed againſt him by Sir Thomas concerning Clariſſa; but I thought I aſſured you there was no foundation for it. Theodore is far too worthy to be guilty of ſuch a practice; and Clariſſa, I am confident, would ſcorn it."

"My dear madam," replied Ellen,

" you muſt not be offended with me;—he is certainly a villain: and as to Clariſſa, ſhe is no better than ſhe ſhould be. They are both together in the houſe:—I this minute beheld them, and the ſervant informed me they came here together in a returned chaiſe!"

Now did the colour forſake the face of Auguſta; ſhe had power only to exclaim, " Is it poſſible!" and ſunk upon a chair.

" Do, madam," cried Ellen, " endeavour to ſupport yourſelf. Conſider, if thoſe infamous wretches were to ſee you, how they would triumph in your weakneſs."

" Yes, Ellen," rejoined Auguſta, " I will ſupport myſelf; they ſhall not witneſs my folly. Could I have thought that Theodore was ſo baſe!—he that appeared all goodneſs!—How has he deceived me!"

Here

Here Auguſta, who could no longer ſuſtain her feelings, burſt into tears.

"My dear lady," reſumed Ellen, "is this ſupporting yourſelf? Do call reſentment to your aid, and leave the houſe this inſtant. Let me order a chaiſe, and we will go to London to-night."

"I will take your advice," ſaid Auguſta; "but firſt order pen, ink, and paper, to be brought."

Ellen obeyed, and the ſervant attended with it.

Auguſta walked to the window to hide her tears, while Ellen, who wiſhed to ſatisfy a natural curioſity, began a converſation with the ſervant.

"That was a handſome young couple," ſaid ſhe, "who left the room to accommodate my miſtreſs; I declare it was ra-

ther rude to disturb them. Pray, have they been long here?"

"Not long," replied the servant; "about half an hour, I believe."

"They look like a young married couple," resumed Ellen: "have they ordered separate beds?"

"They have not ordered any," replied the maid: "but I rather think," continued she, "they have not been long married, as the gentleman pays her great attention."

Augusta heaved a heavy sigh.

"Yes, yes," rejoined Ellen, "that is generally the case at first; their honeymoon, I suppose, is not of many days' duration."

"I should rather suppose it is a stolen match," resumed the maid, "as the couple

couple do not appear to be in very high ſpirits."

Ellen aſked no farther queſtions, and therefore the maid left the room.

Auguſta, as ſoon as ſhe was gone, ſat down and wrote a few words, which ſhe folded up and wafered; then ringing for the ſervant, informed her that ſhe had changed her mind, and ſhould go on to London; therefore deſired a chaiſe and four might be inſtantly got ready, as ſhe wiſhed to reach town before it grew too late."

The order was obeyed; and as ſhe was getting into the chaiſe, ſhe deſired the lads would drive with all poſſible ſpeed, and ſhe would reward them, as ſhe was fearful of travelling in the dark. Then, turning to the maid who attended her to the chaiſe, ſhe gave her half-a-crown, and

desired she would deliver the letter to the young lady who left the room for her accommodation.

No sooner was the chaise gone from the door, than the maid hastened to obey the order.

Clarissa received the letter in the presence of Theodore. "Good Heaven!" said she, "to Clarissa Lesley!—Who could possibly know where to find me?" Then hastily unfolding it, she read as follows:

'MADAM,

'If any arguments of mine could stop 'you in the career of vice, I should think 'my time not thrown away in making 'use of them; but perhaps when I in-'form you that the wickedness of your 'conduct has broken the heart, and put

'an end to the exiſtence of your once
'valued friend, Mrs. Bentley, it may
'have a greater effect upon you than all
'I can advance. If this ſhould be the caſe,
'leave that ſpecious villain Theodore, and
'learn to deſpiſe him, as does

'AUGUSTA FREEMAN.'

Clariſſa ſtood loſt in thought, after having read the letter, and for a few moments her faculties were ſuſpended.

Theodore beheld the viſible alteration in her countenance, and haſtily enquired if the letter contained any diſagreeable intelligence.

Clariſſa was unable to reply, but ſunk down on a chair; yet had ſufficient preſence of mind to hold the letter out to Theodore.

No ſooner had he read it than he rung the bell, and demanded who had left it.

The maid acquainted him with the particulars.

He deſired a horſe might immediately be got ready, declaring he would follow the chaiſe; but when he turned to ſpeak with Clariſſa, he found it would be impoſſible to leave her, ſhe had fainted.

Every aſſiſtance was procured, and they ſhortly reſtored her to her ſenſes, yet nothing could reſtore that peace of mind the letter had deſtroyed.

"Cruel epiſtle! barbarous miſconception!" exclaimed Theodore; "did it follow, becauſe we were ſeen in each other's company, that I ſhould have ſeduced you, and you, loſt to all ſenſe of virtue, ſhould have ſubmitted to it? what part of my conduct

conduct has given riſe to this ſuſpicion?"

"Talk not of ſuſpicion," cried Clariſſa, "that can be done away by an explanation; but what can reſtore my loſt friend? ſhe who was more than a parent to me; ſhe who took delight in inculcating every virtuous principle; what muſt have been her ſufferings if ſhe conſidered this ſtep was with my conſent? but 'tis plain what ſhe ſuffered, ſince her death has been the conſequence. Ah, my God! what has not that man to anſwer for who occaſioned this?"

Theodore endeavoured to ſupport her ſpirits, and adviſed her to bear her lot with fortitude and reſignation.

While he was engaged in this converſation, Freeman's ſervant who had been ordered

ordered to follow Sir Thomas, and who had arrived at the inn ſcarce a minute before, paſſed the door of the apartment, which accidentally was left open, and diſcovering Theodore, entered.

He expreſſed his pleaſure on ſeeing him, alleging, that it was feared ſome accident had happened to him.

"How happy," ſaid he, "will Mr. Somers be, to hear you are ſafe! and the news will be highly acceptable to my maſter." Then turning to a ſervant who had followed him, "Order me a horſe directly," ſaid he; "I have not a moment to ſpare."

Theodore ſtood ſurveying him, and endeavouring to recollect where he had ſeen him; at length he remembered him at Sir Charles Freeman's, but wiſhing to be

be ſatisfied, " You have the advantage of me," ſaid he.

" I am ſervant to Mr. Freeman," replied the man.

Clariſſa hearing the name of Freeman mentioned, turned round haſtily, and the man immediately recollecting her, " Bleſs me!" ſaid he, " Miſs Leſley; how fortunate am I to meet with you! my maſter is diſtracted on your account; he has ſent me in purſuit of you."

Clariſſa ſcreamed with terror.

Theodore ſtarted forwards, and laying hold of the man by his collar, drove him towards the door; " Get out of the room," cried he; " tell your maſter he is a villain, that Miſs Leſley is now under my protection, and that I will forfeit my life before I'll reſign her."

The

The man appeared ſtupified, but inſtantly obeyed; he knew not at firſt how to account for this ſingular conduct, till recalling to his mind the ſuſpicion that had been raiſed concerning Theodore having eloped with Clariſſa, he concluded it was the fact, and therefore made all poſſible haſte to London, for the purpoſe of acquainting his maſter.

When the man was gone, Clariſſa pointed out the neceſſity there was for her immediately quitting the houſe, leſt Freeman ſhould be informed by the man, and come in purſuit of her.

Theodore felt the force of this argument, and therefore ordering a chaiſe, ſet off for London, where they concluded it would be beſt to remain till ſome plan was adopted.

Having

Having taken up their reſidence at the Glouceſter coffee-houſe, they each ſat down and wrote a letter to Mr. Somers, acquainting him with what had occurred ſince they left his protection.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

THE circumſtance of the different parties meeting at the inn, as likewiſe the terror of Clariſſa leſt ſhe ſhould fall into the hands of Mr. Freeman, will appear ſtrange, until the whole is elucidated.

I ſhall therefore unfold the various tranſactions, which will throw a light upon the ſubject.

For this purpoſe I muſt recal to the recollection of my reader the circumſtance mentioned in the firſt volume concerning Clariſſa being in the poſſeſſion of Mrs. Gripe, and her reſcue from that place by Freeman, in company with Somers and Sir Charles.

Mrs. Gripe was a woman who perfectly underſtood the iniquitous buſineſs in which ſhe was engaged.

She had contemplated the beauty of Clariſſa while in her poſſeſſion as a wolf would a lamb that he intended to devour.

She was compelled by imperious neceſſity to part from her; but the moment ſhe had left the door, ſhe deſired a man ſervant to follow Sir Charles's carriage, which conveyed her, and bring home intelligence where ſhe reſided.

As the carriage did not travel faſt, he was able to keep it in ſight; ſaw Clariſſa get out, and watched her till ſhe reached the cottage.

He then enquired of a huſbandman if ſhe lived there, and was anſwered in the affirmative.

After

After which he returned with the wiſhed-for intelligence to Mrs. Gripe, and was by her immediately diſpatched to Sir Thomas Blandford, who, ſhe knew, was at that time in the country, as he had frequently been to her houſe ſince his return.

Sir Thomas no ſooner received the meſſage than he waited on Mrs. Gripe, who informed him of the adventure, and gave ſo luxurious a deſcription of Clariſſa, that he was anxious till he ſhould have an opportunity of ſeeing her; and paid the neceſſary depoſit to Mrs. Gripe in return for the intelligence.

It may appear ſtrange that Sir Thomas ſhould wiſh to poſſeſs Clariſſa, after he had ſo lately obtained poſſeſſion of Sophia Bridport, who ſtill retained a large ſhare of his affections. But Sophia had become

become altered through illneſs, and Clariſſa was a new object. This alone is always a ſufficient incitement to men of libertine principles. His deſires were likewiſe inflamed from the deſcription he had received.

Theſe deſires were neither controlled nor checked by reaſon.

He had come to the poſſeſſion of a large fortune, and conſidered it of no further uſe than as it afforded him the means of adding to his pleaſures. Clariſſa was likewiſe poor; he was able to ſettle an annuity on her, and then he conceived there would be no harm done.

The conſequence of this determination was, that he viſited the cottage on the following morning, where he met with Freeman and Somers, as before related.

When

When he beheld Clariſſa, he conſidered that Mrs. Gripe's deſcription fell far ſhort of the original. He had not expected to find ſo many elegant accompliſhments, combined with beauty, in a cottage.

Yet, beautiful and accompliſhed as ſhe was, ſhe did not inſpire him with a ſentiment of pure affection; a ſtrong deſire to poſſeſs her was all he felt.

He looked forward to the time when he ſhould have her within his power with a degree of ecſtacy, and reſolved that no obſtacle ſhould prevent him from putting his deſigns in practice.

Firm in this intent, he ſent for two men who he knew would undertake any thing, however infamous, with the hope of gain.

The

The moſt difficult point for him to determine was, to what place he ſhould remove her.

He had promiſed Mrs. Gripe to convey Clariſſa to her houſe; but when he recollected it was from that place ſhe was reſcued, and when he heard the high encomiums beſtowed on her at Sir Charles's, he concluded they would attempt to regain her, and, naturally ſuſpecting Mrs. Gripe, would again ſearch her houſe; this made him alter his intention.

He feared ſending her to the place where Sophia Bridport was confined, leſt ſuch an act ſhould give her a more contemptible opinion of him than ſhe already had.

But when he again conſidered that Sophia was ill, and that he could ſend an order to keep them totally ſeparate and

ignorant

ignorant of each other's ſituation, he gave this plan the preference, and adopted the means accordingly.

The day having arrived on which it was ſettled to take her from the cottage, a chaiſe belonging to Sir Thomas was ordered to be ready in a bye-lane near the place; and one of the men, having thrown a carter's frock over his clothes, called at Mrs. Bentley's cottage, and ſeeing Clariſſa, aſſumed the weſt-country expreſſion.

"I'ſe be come," ſaid he, "from muſter Zummers: he wants to ſpeak wi' thee for vour or vive minutes about ſomewhat particular."

Clariſſa obeyed the ſummons, and having put on her cloak and bonnet accompanied the man.

When they arrived at the ſpot where it

it was neceſſary to turn, for the purpoſe of reaching the ferry: "Thig way," ſaid the man; "muſter Zummers is hard by, wi' a muſter Morris."

Sir Thomas had heard of the affair reſpecting Morris, and therefore had ordered the men to make uſe of his name, if occaſion ſhould require.

"Bleſs me!" ſaid Clariſſa, "why did not Mr. Morris come to the cottage?"

"Thee muſt aſk un," replied the man. "I'ſe was only told to bring thee to un; zoo come along."

Clariſſa, not having the leaſt ſuſpicion, obeyed.

They preſently arrived at the place where ſtood the chaiſe.

"Come," ſaid the man, "get thee in. Muſter Zummers aſked thig good man to come wi' his chaiſe vor thee,

that thee might be wi' un the zooner; and becauſe as how the lane was dirty."

Clariſſa heſitated.

"Come, get thee in," repeated the man; "there is good news a-brewing vor thee; thou wilt be pleaſed when thee comeſt to hear it."

Clariſſa coupled this intelligence with the receipt of the fifty-pound note, and thinking it really was the caſe, ſubmitted.

The other man then mounting the horſe, drove with uncommon velocity; ſtruck through Keynſham, croſſed the bridge, and took into a private road.

Clariſſa becoming extremely anxious, required he would immediately inform her where he was going, or that ſhe would open the door and get out.

"Make thyſelf eaſy," replied the man, "and

" and I'ſe wull tell thee all about un. Thee ſeeſt as how muſter Morris was coming to thee wi' ſome good news, but met wi' a mizvortune on the road, and is at a houſe hard by wi' muſter Zummers, zo don't be alarmed."

In a few minutes they croſſed a common, and arrived at a lonely cottage.

The man got off his horſe, and opening the door, deſired Clariſſa to walk in.

Clariſſa, although oppreſſed by a thouſand fears, was neceſſitated to comply.

Having reached the interior of the cottage, ſhe was conducted to a room.

" There," ſaid the man, handing her a chair and aſſuming his own dialect, " ſit down."

" Where is Mr. Somers?" exclaimed Clariſſa; " let me ſee him this inſtant."

The man laughed. " I can ſee by your face," ſaid he, " that you will ſhortly be married. There is a gentleman who is in love with you, and will have you whether you approve or not."

Clariſſa now ſaw her ſituation, and exclaimed, " Is it poſſible Mr. Freeman can have uſed me thus?"

The men had been ſtrictly forbid mentioning the name of Sir Thomas, and had likewiſe received a hint of Freeman's partiality to her; and Sir Thomas, ſuſpecting he would endeavour to recover her, deſired them to avoid him if he fell in their way; when, therefore, Clariſſa mentioned the name of Freeman, the men thought they could not do better than by laying it to his charge.

" Mr. Freeman," ſaid the man, " means

to

to act honourably by you; but I ſuppoſe you have refuſed to take him, or he ſuſpects as much."

"Could I have thought," ſaid Clariſſa, "that my refuſal, dictated by ſuch diſintereſted principles, would have prompted him to act thus cruelly by me!—What will become of Mrs. Bentley!—ſhe will run diſtracted!"

"No, no;" replied the man, "Mr. Freeman has by this time acquainted her with the whole particulars, and promiſed to convey you back as ſoon as you are married; therefore make your mind eaſy, and be aſſured he would not have taken this ſtep, if he could have been happy without you."

Clariſſa remembered ſhe had a fifty-pound note in her poſſeſſion, and offered to bribe the men if they would conduct

her back. But it ſo happened that Sir Thomas had promiſed thirty pounds to each of them, excluſive of their expences; as ſuch, they made a merit of refuſing Clariſſa's propoſal.

The men now quitted the room, and locking the door, left her to contemplate on her ſituation.

She called to her mind the reſpectful attention Freeman had paid her, and concluded he could have no diſhonourable motives.

What confirmed her the more in this opinion, was his conduct when he firſt beheld her in the poſſeſſion of Mrs. Gripe. If his intentions had been improper, he had then an opportunity of putting them in practice; inſtead of which, he reſcued and reſtored her to Mrs. Bentley.

Theſe events contributed greatly to leſſen

leſſen her anxiety, reſpecting his future conduct.

What chiefly occupied her mind was, whether ſhe ſhould act with propriety in accepting his hand under the circumſtances. She conſidered that Mrs. Bentley had been a mother to her, and therefore ought to be conſulted; that, in an affair of ſo much importance, no force ſhould be uſed, leſt, at a future period, it ſhould give him cauſe to doubt her affection. This idea carried every thing before it, and ſhe determined, if ſhe did accept him, that it ſhould be her own voluntary act.

She next began to make every excuſe for the raſh ſtep he had taken, by placing it to the account of the attachment he had for her, which had hurried him into an act that he otherwiſe would not have

been guilty of, and partly blamed herſelf for having refuſed him when he made ſo honourable and diſintereſted an offer, which refuſal had driven him to this ſtep.

The evening having approached, the men made their appearance, and informed her they were ordered by Mr. Freeman to conduct her to London, where ſhe would meet him ready with a licence; and that they had only ſtopt at the cottage till it was dark, fearing leſt ſhe ſhould make any reſiſtance, or call upon the paſſers-by to reſcue her.

They further informed her, if ſhe would ſubmit to the journey without making any attempt of that nature, they would permit her to travel at her eaſe, and not uſe any precautions which might be offenſive to her if put in practice.

Clariſſa, who had argued herſelf into a belief that Freeman did not mean to conduct himſelf otherwiſe than honourably by her, thinking likewiſe that all reſiſtance would be uſeleſs, unleſs a favourable opportunity ſhould offer, and probably might ſubject her to inſult from the men, promiſed to remain quiet.

The chaiſe was now produced, the blinds of which were drawn up and faſtened. She was immediately conducted in, followed by the ſame man as had accompanied her before.

The chaiſe proceeded with velocity, and never ſtopt, except for a few minutes, while the man who rode watered the horſes at a pond, and gave them ſome hay.

Theſe horſes proceeded forty miles, and then arriving at a ſmall public-houſe, were

relieved by others, which had previouſly been left in readineſs.

The cattle, being high fed, performed the reſidue of the journey, and arrived before the dawn of day at the appointed ſpot, about two miles on the London ſide of Reading.

Clariſſa had flattered herſelf ſhe ſhould reach London during the day, where ſhe concluded an opportunity would offer itſelf of calling for aſſiſtance; but having reached the deſtined place, and being informed her journey was at an end, ſhe felt extremely diſappointed.

The man diſmounted from his horſe, and entered the houſe to inſtruct the ſervants relative to the impoſition they had practiſed, by making uſe of Freeman's name, and to deſire they would conduct themſelves accordingly.

Having

Having ſeen that an apartment was ready for her, the man returned to the chaiſe and requeſted her to alight.

Clariſſa looked around, but could diſcover nothing except fields and trees, the houſe ſtanding in a lonely ſituation.

He then introduced her to a room, in which was a fire and a ſmall bed, and informed her they expected Mr. Freeman before the expiration of the day.

An elderly woman, who from her appearance ſeemed once to have been of Mrs. Gripe's profeſſion, entered the room, and requeſted if ſhe would take any refreſhment before ſhe retired to reſt.

Clariſſa was too much agitated, and anxious for her future ſafety, to accept of any; ſhe therefore replied in the negative, and deſired ſhe might be left to her repoſe.

The woman obeyed, and Clariſſa heard her lock the door, and take out the key.

She now examined her apartment, and going to the window, obſerved it was ſecured with iron bars; but this did not excite ſurpriſe, as the apartment was on the ground floor, it being uſual, more particularly in a lone ſituation, to place iron bars on the lower windows of the houſe for protection.

She ſat down on the bed, and exhauſted her imagination in ruminating on the conſequence of this adventure, till, wearied with thought, ſhe ſunk upon her pillow, thinking to obtain an hour's reſpite in the arms of ſleep; dreams more dreadful than her waking thoughts troubled her mind, and prevented her repoſe.

She awoke and rung the bell, the woman attended; Clariſſa aſked her a variety

riety of queſtions; but all the anſwer ſhe could obtain was, that the houſe belonged to Mr. Freeman, and that he was hourly expected.

Clariſſa accepted of ſome trifling refreſhment, and endeavoured to bear her confinement with fortitude, yet did the hours paſs on heavily, and night approached without hearing any thing of Mr. Freeman.

On the afternoon of the following day ſhe was amuſed with a plaintive ſong in a female voice, and while ſhe was liſtening to it with the utmoſt attention, ſhe heard a confuſed noiſe of voices apparently as if ſome men were quarrelling.

This noiſe continued to approach her, and in a moment the door of her apartment was burſt open.

Clariſſa

Clariſſa was terrified, and ran behind the bed for ſafety, while a man followed her whoſe countenance ſeemed filled with anxiety and deſperation.

He viewed her for a moment, and then prepared to leave the room with the ſame haſte on which he entered it, but was prevented by a ſervant of the houſe who attempted to lay hold of his collar.

The ſtranger had an oak ſtick in his hand, with which he levelled a blow at the ſervant that ſtunned him, and inſtantly purſued his courſe.

Clariſſa obſerving the man laying in the paſſage and the door open, thought it a favourable opportunity, by taking advantage of the confuſion that reigned in the houſe, to effect her eſcape; therefore, catching hold of her bonnet and cloak, ſhe

ran

ran till ſhe reached the outward gate, and unbolting it found herſelf beſide a lane, and a wood at a ſmall diſtance, to this wood ſhe fled, fearing leſt ſhe ſhould be miſſed and purſued. Having reached it, at the diſtance of half a mile ſhe diſcovered the main road, which ſhe knew by the ſtages and poſt-chaiſes that were paſſing and repaſſing.

Thither ſhe concluded it would be ſafeſt to fly, as ſhe might meet with ſome conveyance that would tranſport her out of their reach.

With this intent ſhe ran, and in a few minutes reached it; a returned chaiſe that moment was coming up; the lad called to her, and ſhe accepted a place; but nothing could equal her ſurpriſe on diſcovering Theodore ſeated in it.

As

As ſoon as the firſt ſalutations were over, and ſhe began to reaſſume her courage in conſequence of having met with a protector, ſhe acquainted him with the whole of her adventure.

Theodore teſtified his aſtoniſhment at the ſuppoſed conduct of Freeman; requeſted ſhe would make herſelf perfectly eaſy, for that he would protect her with his life, in caſe of a purſuit.

The lad, after he had driven about half the way from Reading to Maidenhead, ſtopped at a ſmall inn to water his horſes and enjoy his pint of ale.

They alighted, and were ſhewn into a ſmall parlour, where they ordered tea.

Clariſſa requeſted he would explain to her the cauſe that had induced him to quit the protection of Mr. Somers.

" It

"It may be compriſed in a few words," replied Theodore; and then related as follows:

"Compelled by the ſeverity and cool treatment of Auguſta to quit the cottage, I haſtened to the hill for the purpoſe of returning to Cliffdown-lodge, yet ſtopt when I arrived at the ſummit to indulge my feelings, by once more beholding her, but ſhe had quitted the garden.

"I then ſat down to ruminate on what had paſſed, and endeavoured to dry up a tear leſt it ſhould be diſcovered by the ferryman.

"While I ſat loſt in thoughts of a melancholy nature, I beheld a boat paſſing up the river with a perſon in it that I was confident I had ſeen before.

"I drew out a ſmall glaſs from my pocket,

pocket, by the help of which I plainly diſcerned the features of a man who I remembered to have ſeen at my uncle's, and who I knew was in his confidence.

" Greatly alarmed for my own ſafety, I ſtarted up and ran a few ſteps, but being willing to ſatisfy myſelf ſtill further, I again ſtopt till the boat came oppoſite to the hill, where I had a nearer view of him.

" Having perfectly aſſured myſelf concerning the truth of my ſuſpicions, I concluded it would be highly improper to return, and therefore haſtened over the hill that led to the main road.

" A ſtage-coach coming up ſhortly after, I took a ſeat in it, and preſently reached Bath. Here I devoted an hour to ſtudy on what plan was beſt to purſue.

" I had

" I had an inclination to write to Mr. Somers, acquainting him with my reaſons for quitting his houſe; but when I reflected that he poſſibly might have been the perſon who wrote to my uncle, and informed him of my reſidence, I determined to poſtpone writing till I ſhould be at a greater diſtance.

" I hope," continued Theodore, " you do not imagine my ſuſpicions of Mr. Somers lowered him in my eſtimation; I aſſure you it was far from being the caſe; I knew that he would not have acted on that principle unleſs prompted by the beſt of motives.

" After wearying myſelf with thinking of a thouſand plans, I at length reſolved on viſiting London, concluding I ſhould be more ſecure in the metropolis than

than in the country; and not having a quantity of caſh about me, I was obliged to travel at as cheap a rate as poſſible, ſometimes on the outſide of a ſtage-coach, and ſometimes by a returned chaiſe, in which ſituation you found me."

Clariſſa congratulated him on his eſcape, and made uſe of many arguments to remove his ſuſpicions from Somers, alleging, that his relations in London muſt have gained their intelligence from ſome other ſource. Theodore, having called to his recollection the conduct of Sir Charles, turned his ſuſpicion on him.

After they had finiſhed their tea, the lad informed them he was waiting; they immediately returned to the chaiſe, and ſhortly reached Maidenhead, where they were diſcovered by Ellen, and afterwards

wards by Freeman's ſervant, as before related.

Having conducted Auguſta, Theodore, and Clariſſa to London, and ſhewn by what means the two latter were brought together, I ſhall now return to Cliffdown-lodge.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

I LEFT Somers and Sir Charles diſputing: the former ſupported the cauſe of Theodore, and ſtrongly inſiſted that he was totally innocent reſpecting the abſence of Clariſſa; while Sir Charles contended, with ſome warmth, on the contrary.

During this diſpute a ſervant entered, and laid on the table four letters, directed to Somers.

Sir Charles viewed them: "Here is one," ſaid he, "from Freeman; and another from Auguſta! I did not know ſhe had ſettled a correſpondence with you."

Somers was diſconcerted on his diſcovering

vering Auguſta's letter, and taking it up, inſtantly broke the ſeal.

Nothing could exceed his aſtoniſhment when he peruſed it; the contents of which were as follow:

'SIR,

'I HAVE only time, before the poſt ſets 'off, to acquaint you that Theodore is a 'villain. I diſcovered him with Clariſſa 'at an inn on the road; but took no far- 'ther notice than merely to leave a letter 'for Miſs Leſley, acquainting her with 'Mrs. Bentley's death, and added a few 'words of advice. I take this early op- 'portunity of acquainting you, leſt either 'party ſhould again attempt, under the 'maſk of virtue, to impoſe upon your 'goodneſs; and remain

'Your ſincere friend,

'AUGUSTA FREEMAN.'

Somers

Somers had no ſooner read the contents than the letter dropt from his hand.

He ſtarted up, walked a few paces about the room, and then exclaimed, "Never, after this, will I place implicit confidence in any one."

Sir Charles aſked if he might ſee the letter.

"By all means," replied Somers.

Sir Charles peruſed it: "Now," cried he, "who is right, you or me?—I hope you will not for the future diſpute my penetration.—Here is a couple of young crocodiles!—This is the young man that is an ornament to human nature!"

Sir Charles now felt his triumph; and determining to make Somers feel it, he followed him about the room. "You ſee, Mr. Somers," continued he, "I was right. Here is an inſtance of your foreſight;

ſight; theſe are the parties you always defended. Now, Mr. Somers, I hope this will cure you of practiſing ſuch ill-timed benevolence: it will be a leſſon for you in future."

Somers was teazed to that degree that he replied, "It is better to judge too favourably than to be too cenſorious."

"I ſee you are hurt," returned Sir Charles, "therefore I ſhall ſay no more; only, for the future, do place a little more reliance on my judgment."

"I declare," replied Somers, "ſo high was my opinion of them both, that if your daughter had not wrote it, I could not have believed it; and even now it appears to me impoſſible: but I will ſee what theſe other letters contain." Then taking up the letter which came from Theodore, he peruſed it.

This letter contained the motives that made him quit his houſe, his meeting with Clariſſa, the encounter with Freeman's ſervant, his opinion of Freeman's conduct; but did not mention any place where Somers was to write to him.

This letter added greatly to the ſurpriſe of Somers; he immediately ſhewed it to Sir Charles, who having read it, "Do not you ſee the art of this young hypocrite?" ſaid he; "he fears you have ſome ſuſpicion, and therefore lays the blame on Freeman; but let us hear what my nephew has to ſay."

Somers opened Freeman's letter; which informed him of his ſervant having met them together; of Theodore declaring himſelf ready to protect her with his life; his regret that Clariſſa ſhould have acted on ſuch a principle; and contained many

invectives againſt Theodore, who he vowed to puniſh if he met him; that he had called at his aunt's, where he was ſurpriſed on finding Auguſta juſt arrived, and who gave him the ſame intelligence as his ſervant.

Somers delivered this letter likewiſe to Sir Charles, who having peruſed it, "Well, ſir," ſaid he, "what is your opinion now?"

"I am afraid," replied Somers, "it is too true." He then took up the laſt letter, which came from Clariſſa, and which informed him of the methods taken to decoy her from the cottage; an account of her journey till ſhe arrived at the houſe near Reading, which, ſhe ſaid, belonged to Mr. Freeman; her deliverance from there by a ſtranger breaking open the door; her meeting with Theodore; the letter

which ſhe received from Auguſta concerning Mrs. Bentley's death, which ſhe lamented in very pathetic terms; the cruelty of Auguſta's ſuſpicion; and concluded by requeſting him to write to her, directing the letter to be left at the Glouceſter coffee-houſe, and ſhe would call for it.

This letter alſo Somers put into his hands.

"Now, Sir Charles," ſaid Somers, "I hope you will allow that both my young friends are innocent."

"How can you thus perſiſt in your own opinion?" ſaid Sir Charles; "is it not perfectly natural that both the culprits ſhould agree in one ſtory? I have not ſo bad an opinion of Edward, as to ſuppoſe he would be guilty of ſuch a tranſaction."

"Neither have I," rejoined Somers; "this letter has thrown a ſufficient light upon

upon the buſineſs. Clariſſa has been deceived: it was Sir Thomas who employed thoſe men to take her, and they have made uſe of your nephew's name."

Sir Charles laughed at this. "What ſubterfuges," cried he, "do you reſort to, in defence of your firſt opinion!"

"Have patience," reſumed Somers, "and I will explain my reaſons." At this juncture he was interrupted by the entrance of a ſervant, who informed him a Mr. Bridport would be happy to ſpeak with him."

Somers deſired he would ſhew him in.

When the ſervant was gone, "This is the perſon," continued Somers, "that was in priſon at the ſuit of Sir Thomas, and who was liberated when you purchaſed the eſtate.

The ſervant returned, and introduced

Bridport ſupporting his daughter, who was ſo much reduced, as ſcarcely to be able to walk.

Bridport ſtarted back on ſeeing Sir Charles; Somers ran towards him, "Sir Charles," ſaid he, "will be happy to ſee you;" then taking a chair, he ſeated Sophia in it.

Bridport, who did not know Sir Charles till Somers mentioned his name, thanked him for his enlargement. "Ah, my God!" continued he, "what have I not to thank you for, ſince it has afforded me an opportunity of reſcuing my poor ruined and undone girl, from the power of a villain, a ——"

"Hold," cried Somers, interrupting him, "your daughter is not well, permit me to call my ſervant," at the ſame time ringing the bell, and the ſervant attending,

ing, "Conduct this young lady," ſaid he, "to another apartment, and ſee if you can prevail on her to take any refreſhment." Then following Sophia to the door, deſired ſhe would be compoſed and conſider herſelf at home, for that ſhe was now with her friends.

Sophia thanked him, and retired ſupported by the maid.

"Mr. Somers," ſaid Bridport, "I thank you for your kindneſs. I confeſs I was too unguarded, and did not conſider the effect my converſation would have on my poor girl; but you are all goodneſs."

"Say no more about it," replied Somers; "but let me know how you have proceeded ſince you left this houſe, till you recovered your daughter. I have a particular reaſon for my enquiry, which I will ſtate hereafter."

" Permit me firſt to relate," rejoined Bridport, " all that my poor child has acquainted me with; becauſe it is fit you ſhould know her innocence, and the guilt of that monſter who has deſtroyed her."

" Certainly," replied Somers.

Bridport then related the riſe and progreſs of his daughter's affection for Sir Thomas; the means he took to convey her to his houſe; dwelt with force and energy, accompanied by the feelings of a father, on the rape; and her being afterwards conveyed to Reading.

Sir Charles and Somers, who till this time were not acquainted with the full extent of Sir Thomas's conduct, could not avoid mingling their tears with thoſe of the father.

Having gone through with this recital, he proceeded: " After I left this houſe, I haſtened

I haſtened to Briſtol, and as one of the London ſtages was ſetting off, I took my place for Reading, and arrived there about three o'clock in the morning; when I retired to bed for a few hours, to recruit my ſtrength, and aroſe about ſeven: then, taking my oak ſtick in my hand, proceeded in ſearch of the place, which I preſently found.

" I had conſidered on what plan was beſt to purſue, and concluded the moſt probable means to gain admittance would be by artifice.

" When I arrived at the houſe, I rung the bell at the outer gate; a ſervant attended, who demanded my buſineſs.

" I pulled off my hat, and, ſcratching my head, aſſumed the weſt-country dialect: 'I'ſe be come,' ſaid I, 'vrom Zur Tummus; he ſaid as how he ſhould want me,

and desired I'se would wait here vor un.' This kind of language," continued Bridport, "and the booriſh method I practiſed, together with my making uſe of Sir Thomas's name, had the deſired effect. The man requeſted I would walk in, and conducted me to the kitchen, where he aſked me ſeveral queſtions relative to his maſter, all which I anſwered with the ſame ſimplicity as before. Having ſatisfied his enquiries, he ſet the breakfaſt equipage before me, and deſired I would make free. During this time I attentively ſurveyed the place and the ſervants, who conſiſted of two men and two women. I obſerved one of the maids carry from the kitchen two ſeparate trays, with breakfaſt equipage on each; heard them talk of a young lady, and afterwards of Mrs. Thompſon."

"Now

"Now mark," ſaid Somers, interrupting him, and addreſſing himſelf to Sir Charles: "you hear this houſe was near Reading; the very place where Miſs Leſley was confined, or I am much miſtaken. Well, ſir," continued Somers, turning to Bridport, "proceed. I beg your pardon for interrupting you."

"When they mentioned Mrs. Thompſon," ſaid Bridport, "I concluded it muſt be my poor girl, as Sir Thomas went by that name; and ſuch were my feelings, I ſcarcely knew how to retain myſelf in my ſituation; but I waited in expectation that I ſhould ſhortly ſee her.

"After breakfaſt I walked about the houſe, obſerved the maid come out of a room, and locking the door put the key in her pocket; after which I beheld her take out another key, proceed to a dif-

ferent apartment at the further end of the paſſage, unlock the door, and go in; but as I heard no voices, I did not know there was any perſon in the rooms.

" After ſpending the whole morning in the utmoſt anxiety, I heard one of the men expreſſing his ſurpriſe that the young lady had not rung her bell ſince breakfaſt, and aſked the maid if ſhe had not better wait on her. The maid replied it was out of her power, as ſhe had not the key.

" By this," continued Bridport, " I was able to learn, that, whoever the young lady was, ſhe was under confinement; and I concluded my daughter was likewiſe in the ſame ſituation. The man went on, and obſerved, that the young lady was curſedly in the dumps. ' Aye, aye,' rejoined the maid, ' ſhe will know better

before

before ſhe is many days older; Sir Thomas will let her into the ſecret.'

"I gueſſed the meaning," continued Bridport, "of this wretch's expreſſion; and was ſhocked to think a female could be ſo infamouſly wicked as to aſſiſt in the deſtruction of her own ſex. Fortunately ſhe left the room, and was followed by the man, or I believe I ſhould have betrayed myſelf.

"I had not been long alone before I heard ſome perſon ſinging, in a plaintive ſtyle, the Lamentations of Mary queen of Scots. The ſound was familiar to my ear; I liſtened a minute, and being poſitive it was my daughter's voice, I could no longer contain myſelf, but graſping my oak ſtick, haſtened to the door I had ſeen the maid lock in the morning.

"One of the men, who ſaw me running

ning towards it, I believe, began to ſuſpect: he clapt his hand againſt my breaſt, and aſked me where I was going. I made no anſwer, but driving him away, ſet my foot againſt the door, and burſt it open. The fellow endeavoured to prevent my entering, but I ruſhed in, and after looking round the room diſcovered a young lady, but not my daughter."

"Hold," cried Somers: then taking up Clariſſa's letter, he ſhewed it to Sir Charles, and aſked him if he did not think thoſe circumſtances ſo far agreed.

"What ſort of a young lady," ſaid Sir Charles, "was this you mention?"

"One of the moſt lovely girls," replied Bridport, "I ever beheld: ſhe ſeemed about nineteen years of age, and appeared greatly terrified at my approach."

"What

"What became of her?" resumed Sir Charles.

"I do not know," replied Bridport; "but if you will permit me, I will relate what further passed."

"By all means," rejoined Sir Charles.

"As soon as I perceived this was not my unfortunate girl," resumed Bridport, "I hastened towards the door for the purpose of pursuing my search further.

"The man who had endeavoured to prevent my entrance now seized me by my collar; I extricated myself from him, and with one blow felled him to the ground.

"I then rushed towards the other door which I had seen the maid enter in the morning; here I was again attacked by the other man.

"I swore

"I ſwore inſtant death to any one who ſhould moleſt me.

"In a moment I heard the voice of my child exclaim, 'My father! my father!' The ſound thrilled through my heart, and gave me additional ſtrength; I twice threw the man—he was a remarkably powerful fellow—but this oak ſtick, which I ſhall for ever revere, paid him the ſame compliment it had done to the other. I then burſt open the door, and the firſt object that ſtruck my ſight was my child laying on the floor to all appearance dead.

"The women, who witneſſed the affray, had run to the further end of the paſſage.

"I ordered them inſtantly to bring ſome ſpirits and water.

"The

"The trembling wretches obeyed, and in a ſhort time my poor girl was reſtored. Excuſe me the recital," continued he, burſting into tears, "I cannot proceed."

"Compoſe yourſelf," ſaid Somers; "no doubt it was an affecting ſcene for a father."

Bridport having recovered himſelf, went on: "My Sophia hung upon my neck, called me her deliverer, fell at my feet, and entreated pardon for a crime it ſeems ſhe never wilfully committed. It was fortunate for me I had diſabled the two ſervants; for ſo much was I weakened by this interview, that a child might have beat me down with a lath.

"After my firſt tumults were over, I concluded it would be the moſt expedient method inſtantly to quit the houſe; but determined firſt to ſee the young lady, and,

and, if ſhe had been carried there againſt her conſent, to take her with me, if not, to reaſon with her on the impropriety of her conduct; but when I again entered the room I could ſee nothing of her.

"I demanded of the women if ſhe had paſſed; they were equally aſtoniſhed with myſelf, and on ſearching the apartment, diſcovered that her cloak and bonnet were miſſing; then on looking towards the outward gate obſerved it open.

"The two men had been able by this time to ſet up, and having heard that I was the father of Sophia, they did not appear inclined to diſpute my poſſeſſion of her; but made loud lamentations concerning the young lady; deſired the women would bind up their heads, which were broke, although not ſufficient to do them any

any material injury, and declared they would go in ſearch of her.

" Finding their intentions, I judged it neceſſary to ſtay ſome time longer, till ſhe ſhould have been enabled to get effectually out of their reach.

" I therefore graſped my oak ſtick, and proteſted I would knock the firſt man down that offered to ſtir.

" The fellows were not in a ſituation to make any reſiſtance; and therefore contented themſelves with remaining in their original poſition.

" I next ſearched every room in the houſe, determining to be fully ſatisfied whether ſhe had really effected her eſcape or not, but could ſee nothing of her.

" After having continued about an hour longer, I took leave of the place.

" The

" The greateſt difficulty I had to ſurmount was on account of Sophia; ſhe had been extremely ill, and was ſcarcely able to walk.

" I aſſiſted her with my arm, and ſometimes carried her, till I reached the main road, where in a ſhort time we obtained a conveyance to Reading, from which town we travelled in poſt-chaiſes till we reached this ſpot."

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

"MR. Bridport," ſaid Somers, "you have rendered me an eſſential ſervice by delivering the young lady you have been ſpeaking of from her confinement. I was in the utmoſt conſternation about her. She is a perſon for whom I have a great reſpect, and to whom I am left executor.

"I have," continued Somers, "had frequent occaſions to remark, that wickedneſs defeats itſelf in many particulars.

"Sir Thomas has acted infamouſly by Miſs Bridport. This affair, by what I have heard this morning, will not terminate in its preſent ſtate; but I ſhall forbear mentioning my intentions on the ſubject

ject at preſent, contenting myſelf with taking a review of his conduct.

" The houſe near Reading was taken for her; towhich place he likewiſe thought it moſt proper for Clariſſa to be conveyed; and thus, while I was repining for the abſence of Clariſſa, her abſence has been the means of Miſs Bridport's releaſe; for, if ſhe had not been miſſing, no intelligence would have been obtained from Mrs. Gripe, nor could we have ſuſpected her place of reſidence.

" Here is one inſtance where wickedneſs defeats its own ends.

" So likewiſe Sir Thomas remained behind, after Clariſſa was gone, at Sir Charles's, for the purpoſe of injuring the character of Theodore, by attaching that guilt to him which belonged to himſelf, and by wounding the peace of Auguſta; had

had he not done this, he would, in all probability, or according to human appearance, have wounded the peace of Clariſſa, as he has done that of Miſs Bridport. In fact, every act he committed has defeated itſelf. Clariſſa is free, as likewiſe is Sophia.

" If any perſon had aſked him what he expected to obtain by poſſeſſing Miſs Bridport, he would have anſwered, ' Happineſs ;' but here he has been foiled.

" If he could be prevailed upon to ſtate his preſent feelings, he would tell you he is miſerable ; a prey to fear, and perpetually under anxiety leſt his former conduct ſhould be inveſtigated. This is always the caſe," continued Somers, " where happineſs is ſought for by improper means : no ſolid comfort can ever be

be the lot of man, unleſs it has its origin in virtue.

" I am aware that one argument may be uſed againſt this doctrine; and that is, the ſituation of Sophia, whoſe misfortune appears irremediable. I am of a contrary opinion; but, that you may judge what I allude to, I will draw a caſe by way of inference.

" I am not of that revengeful nature to proſecute a man for robbing my houſe, provided he has ſpent the money he deprived me of; but, if he had not, or had the power of reſtoring me an equivalent, I certainly would purſue the means to obtain it.

" Therefore, permit the caſe of Sophia to reſt till we ſee what ſhall be the event."

" I un-

"I underſtand you," ſaid Sir Charles, ſomewhat peeviſhly.

Somers was diſconcerted at the manner of Sir Charles's expreſſing himſelf: he had concluded, that as the guilt of Sir Thomas was manifeſt, he would no longer be deſirous of courting his alliance; but, to be more thoroughly ſatisfied, "I hope," ſaid he, "this conduct on the part of Sir Thomas will incline you to rid Auguſta of all further trouble on his account."

Sir Charles knew not how to act; he had given Sir Thomas his promiſe, as likewiſe written to his ſiſter in London, to which place Auguſta was gone, mentioning her having formed an improper attachment for Theodore, who he repreſented in the blackeſt colours; and further informed her, he wiſhed to forward a match between his daughter and Sir Tho-

mas, who he requeſted ſhe would admit to her houſe, and endeavour to promote the wiſhed for alliance.

Sir Charles, as I have had frequent occaſion to obſerve, valued himſelf highly upon his penetration; he could not, therefore, prevail upon himſelf to confeſs his error to his ſiſter, which it would be neceſſary for him to do, if he were to requeſt her to forbid his viſits; and therefore, when Somers put the laſt queſtion, he replied, " I ſhall not judge too haſtily of Sir Thomas: as to his conduct reſpecting Miſs Bridport, it certainly has been cruel; and before I admit him into my family, I ſhall inſiſt on his making every reparation, both to her and her father, that is in his power.

" Reſpecting Clariſſa, if it be really true, ſtill, as no harm is done, we ought

to

to overlook it. Marriage may cure theſe youthful follies; Sir Thomas is wild, has come to the poſſeſſion of a large eſtate, and has no one to control him; you will allow this is ſome palliation."

Somers obſerved the countenance of Bridport, in which was pourtrayed ſtrong marks of diſapprobation; and turning to Sir Charles, "It is of no uſe to reply," ſaid he, "as your ſentiments and mine are totally different; therefore, if you have no objection, we will let the ſubject drop."

Sir Charles, feeling no inclination to purſue it in the preſence of Bridport, was happy to have an end put to the converſation.

After aſſuring Bridport that he would exert his influence with Sir Thomas in his behalf, and reminding Somers of

his promiſe reſpecting Mrs. Somers, he took his leave.

As ſoon as he was gone, "This is the way the world argues in general," ſaid Bridport; "he is young, has come to the poſſeſſion of a large fortune: what is all this to me? Can it reſtore the happineſs I have loſt? It may plead an excuſe with him, but it will be but a ſmall palliation when he appears before his God."

"The world," replied Somers, "are ſilenced by the property the criminal is in poſſeſſion of. Let us reverſe the ſcene. Sir Charles has a daughter; if the ſon of a farmer had obtained poſſeſſion of Auguſta, as Sir Thomas had of Sophia, then would he tell a different tale; you would hear Sir Charles ſtigmatizing him with the name of a villain, a monſter, and in all probability he would proſecute him to death;

death; while ſociety in general would execrate him, and think he richly deſerved his fate. But Sir Thomas has wealth, and that, in a world like this, is a ſubſtitute for religion, and will plead an excuſe for every vice."

Somers now went in ſearch of Sophia, who he found conſiderably more compoſed than when ſhe left the room.

A faint bluſh was viſible on her cheek when he approached her, originating from a ſenſe of her ſituation, and a ſuſpicion that her father had acquainted him with the whole of her ſtory.

Somers endeavoured to remove it by a tender ſympathiſing manner, which was perfectly natural to him; welcomed her to his houſe with the cordiality of a brother; ordered every attention to be paid her; and, that ſhe might be rendered more

comfortable, hired another ſervant to attend her. Nor was he leſs attentive to her father; he endeavoured to reſtore that peace to his mind, which for ſome time he had been a ſtranger to.

The cordial welcome that Somers had given to Sophia on her arrival, the profound reſpect and tenderneſs with which he treated her, together with the kindneſs he had manifeſted to her father, placed him high in her eſtimation. She heard her father repeatedly declare his intention of being revenged on Sir Thomas, and dreaded leſt he ſhould attempt to put his threats in execution, and force her to become an accomplice, without which it would be impoſſible to carry on a proſecution.

In this perplexing dilemma ſhe had no one to fly to, excepting Somers; he poſ-

ſeſſed

ſeſſed the confidence of her father, and was certain his advice would have great weight with him. She likewiſe judged from his appearance, which wore the ſemblance of benignity; from his general character; but more particularly from the tender conduct ſhe experienced; that ſhe ſhould be able, upon fairly ſtating her ſentiments, to wean him over to her intereſt.

Somers, in the mean time, viewed with regret the deadly hate that occupied the breaſt of Bridport againſt Sir Thomas, and feared leſt it ſhould interrupt the plan he had in agitation.

He likewiſe wiſhed for an opportunity of conſulting with Sophia alone, reſpecting her ſentiments, that he might thereby know what would be the moſt conducive to her happineſs.

Bridport having occaſion to viſit Briſtol in the afternoon, Somers determined during his abſence to ſpend the time with his daughter; he therefore ſent his ſervant to enquire if ſhe could indulge him with a few minutes' audience.

Sophia received the intimation with pleaſure.

Somers having taken his ſeat beſide her, "Firſt," ſaid he, "before I enter on the buſineſs that brought me here, I wiſh you to conſider me not only as your friend, but as your brother; one who has your intereſt at heart, equal, if not ſuperior, to a father; one who ſincerely commiſerates your caſe, and will do all in his power to relieve it. If, therefore, you conſider me in this light, you will in return deal by me with candour, for without that I may be doing you an injury, while

while I am attempting to render you a ſervice."

Sophia thanked him for his generous intentions, and aſſured him ſhe would anſwer any enquiry with the frankneſs he deſired.

"Sir Thomas," reſumed Somers, "has acted by you with a cruelty I ſhall not animadvert upon; at the ſame time he has been unguarded; the conſequence of which is, that he has thrown himſelf into your power.

"You cannot compel him to reſtore you happineſs; but I am of opinion, ſooner than he would ſubmit to a proſecution, he would by marriage reſtore your name to that luſtre he has ſo wantonly deprived it of."

"Ah, Mr. Somers," ſaid Sophia,

" this is what I wiſhed to ſpeak with you upon.

" I cannot become his proſecutor; revenge never can enter a breaſt like mine; and if it could, I have not the power to exerciſe it againſt him."

" It is not my wiſh," reſumed Somers, " to carry the proſecution into effect; I mean to threaten it, with the hope it will compel him to do an act of juſtice."

" Let me entreat," ſaid Sophia, " that you will leave him to the exerciſe of his own will. I cannot endure that he ſhould think I am actuated either by a revengeful or a mercenary motive; neither ſhould force be made uſe of in a connection of that nature, and if it were, it would be of little ſervice to me.

" One

"One more queſtion," ſaid Somers, "and I have done: Do you love Sir Thomas?"

"Love him!" exclaimed Sophia; "Heaven is my witneſs how much! Yet permit me to ſay a few words in extenuation of this ſentiment, or you will think it ſingular, after the virtuous education that was beſtowed on me, I ſhould place my heart upon a man of his libertine principles.

"When he returned from the univerſity he was beloved by every perſon in the houſe, even to the moſt menial ſervant; and reſpected by all that knew him for his virtues and amiable carriage.

"He was the pride of his father, while his mother adored him.

"This was the man on whom I fixed my affection; could I do leſs? he who

at all times paid me unbounded reſpect, treated me with uncommon tenderneſs, and took every means within his power to inſpire me with a ſentiment in his favour.

" He is now ſtrangely altered for the worſe. By the death of his father he loſt his monitor, and was preſently ſurrounded by the vicious, who have deſtroyed his principles, and led him into error. This has deprived him of my eſteem; but I ſtill exiſt a fatal proof, that love can continue when eſtimation is gone."

" They," reſumed Somers, " who aver that love cannot exiſt without eſteem, maintain a manifeſt error; I am another monument of its falſhood. But, come, Sophia, you muſt endeavour to exilarate your ſpirits; be aſſured, ſince you have thus

thus candidly entruſted me with your ſentiments, I will act by you in ſuch manner as ſhall be moſt conducive to your future happineſs: in the mean time, you muſt recruit your ſtrength; amuſe your mind with reading, and accept of nouriſhing food, or your conſtitution will not be able to bear up againſt this unavailing ſorrow."

"As well might you conclude," replied Sophia, "that the dews from Heaven would compenſate for a ſummer's drought, as to ſuppoſe nouriſhing food would reſtore a wretch oppreſſed as I am: no; all I aſk is to be freed from the turmoil my father would engage me in; I ſhall then with peace and reſignation ſink into my grave, the only hope that now is left me to find an end to ſorrow."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Somers,

as he roſe from his chair to hide a tear this ſubject had occaſioned. "There is, I truſt, ſtill happineſs in ſtore for you."

Somers was unable to proceed; his ſoul was tuned to ſympathy, he was therefore neceſſitated rather abruptly to leave the room, leſt this conduct in him ſhould add to her affliction; and as he found himſelf inadequate to the taſk of adminiſtering comfort, while his heart continued thus oppreſt.

Having in ſome meaſure compoſed his mind, he next turned his attention to his young friends in London.

He wrote to Clariſſa, requeſting her return to his houſe; promiſed to be her brother and protector; informed her of Mrs. Bentley's bequeſt; yet did not think proper to ſtate who had been the party that decoyed her from home, but contented

tented himſelf with informing her ſhe had been groſsly impoſed on, which he promiſed to explain to her when he ſhould have the pleaſure of her company.

In this letter he enclofed another to Theodore, which he concluded Clariſſa would have an opportunity of delivering to him, as he imagined ſhe knew of his addreſs.

To Theodore he explained the true motives that induced the meſſenger from London to viſit him; acquainted him likewiſe with Auguſta's ſentiments in his favour, and the cauſes that had occaſioned her ſingular coolneſs towards him; promiſed to write to her, and remove the unfavourable impreſſion ſhe had received on ſeeing him with Clariſſa at the inn; and repreſented the neceſſity of his immediate

mediate return, which laſt invitation he ſtrongly preſſed him to accept.

Somers likewiſe wrote to Freeman; declared he had been deceived reſpecting Theodore; that they had *all* been in an error; informed him he had invited Clariſſa to his houſe, and that, if he ſhould be inclined to honour him with a viſit, he would more fully explain himſelf.

At the ſame time he wrote to Auguſta, to whom he was more explicit: he ſtated the conduct of Sir Thomas at large; but directed her on no account to acquaint Freeman with it, as he knew a duel would be the conſequence.

He likewiſe informed her he had written to the other parties, inviting them to his houſe, and concluded by hoping her aunt would ſhortly recover her health, which

would

would afford her an opportunity of returning.

Theſe letters Somers immediately diſpatched.

I ſhall now leave him with Mr. and Miſs Bridport, while I attend to the party in town.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

WHEN Auguſta arrived at her aunt's, whoſe name was Seaton; nothing could equal her ſurpriſe on finding her in perfect health.

Mrs. Seaton endeavoured to turn it off by a ſmile: "Really, my dear," ſaid ſhe, "I could exiſt no longer without you; and unleſs I had made uſe of this ſtratagem, I am confident your father would not have conſented to part from you."

"It happens fortunate," replied Auguſta, "as I have many circumſtances to appriſe you of, and ſhall be thankful for your advice."

It will be neceſſary, before I proceed, to give ſome account of Mrs. Seaton.

She

She was the only ſiſter of Sir Charles and Edward's father, conſiderably younger than either of them, being at the time I mention not forty, and had the reputation of being a handſome widow.

Mr. Seaton, her late huſband, was a man far advanced in years, who had married her for her perſonal accompliſhments.

Mrs. Seaton being of a lively turn, and partial to company, led but an unpleaſant life with her huſband, who was extremely jealous and parſimonious.

At his deceaſe he left her in the poſſeſſion of half his fortune; the other half he bequeathed to Edward Freeman, her nephew.

Having become a widow, ſhe determined never again to enter into the matrimonial ſtate, leſt her time ſhould paſs as unpleaſantly as it had heretofore done.

It

It is a remark I have frequently made, that when a widow is left with fifty thouſand pounds, report is ſure to add a hundred thouſand to it. This report induced Sir Thomas Blandford to form an acquaintance with her, and although ſhe was conſiderably older than himſelf, and he poſſeſſed a large fortune, ſtill he had no objection to a handſome widow with ſo extenſive a portion.

Mrs. Seaton having made up her mind, Sir Thomas was of courſe unſucceſsful in his application; but ſhe having explained the extent of her income, made him bear his diſappointment with a better grace.

Her next ſuitor was a Mr. St. Aubin, a Weſt-India merchant. He had continued a bachelor, and was five-and-forty years of age.

This

This gentleman likewiſe met with a refuſal; but did not relinquiſh all hope in conſequence of it, as he ſtill kept up an acquaintance with her, expecting that ſhe would alter her opinion.

When Sir Thomas viſited Glouceſterſhire, for the purpoſe of ſelling an eſtate to Sir Charles, and became acquainted with Auguſta, it occurred to him that he ſhould be the better able to ſucceed if ſhe were with her aunt in London, than if ſhe remained with her father, as he feared ſhe would gain intelligence of his conduct to Sophia Bridport.

He therefore wrote to Mrs. Seaton, acquainting her of his intentions (if poſſible) of being allied to her family by a marriage with Auguſta, and requeſted ſhe would prevail on her to viſit London.

In

In addition to this he related the affair of Theodore, who he repreſented as an adventurer that had introduced himſelf in the country for the purpoſe of creating a fortune by marriage; and likewiſe that he met with too great encouragement from her niece.

Mrs. Seaton, on the receipt of this, was alarmed on the account of Auguſta, and determined to have her company in town; concluding ſhe ſhould be able to break off the connection with Theodore, and forward an union with Sir Thomas, whoſe family and fortune were unexceptionable. For this purpoſe ſhe wrote to Auguſta and Sir Charles, making illneſs her pretext.

Auguſta had not been many minutes in her company before Freeman entered, and not obſerving her, threw himſelf upon a chair in the utmoſt agony of mind.

"Edward,"

"Edward," ſaid Mrs. Seaton, "what has happened to diſcompoſe you?"

"I have been ill uſed by a villain," replied Freeman; "but if I find the young impoſtor, either his life or mine ſhall terminate the diſpute."

Auguſta, who ſaw the anguiſh of Edward, ran towards him.

Freeman was ſurpriſed on meeting her, and inſtantly communicated the intelligence he had received from his ſervant, concerning Theodore and Clariſſa.

"You don't ſeem in the leaſt aſtoniſhed," continued he: "when it reached me, I could ſcarcely believe it poſſible."

Auguſta explained, by informing him reſpecting her having detected them at the inn, and that ſhe had wrote to Clariſſa.

The ſervant now arrived at the door with

with a couple of horſes, and ſent to acquaint his maſter.

Auguſta did not till now conceive it was his intention to purſue them; ſhe entreated he would abandon ſuch a plan, and declared ſhe ſhould be wretched during his abſence.

Mrs. Seaton likewiſe added her entreaty to that of Auguſta's; at the ſame time ringing the bell, deſired the ſervant to take the horſes back, as her nephew had changed his mind.

Freeman felt himſelf neceſſitated to ſubmit.

"I ſhall one day meet him," ſaid he.

"Hold," cried Auguſta, "leave him to the puniſhment of Heaven."

"May Heaven puniſh me if I do!" replied Freeman. "I ſtand indebted to him for more favours than one. You may

may remember he wanted to ingratiate himſelf into your favour, and had it not been for the innocent device I made uſe of, moſt probably he might have ſucceeded. I cannot imagine," continued he, " how Somers could be ſo much impoſed on: he is certainly a good man; but his beſt friends muſt allow he is rather ſimple."

" Edward," reſumed Auguſta, " I cannot hear you ſpeak againſt Mr. Somers: you may remember my father was equally partial to Theodore; nor was any one more faſcinated with him than yourſelf. If it were an error in Somers, have you not been guilty of the ſame reſpecting Clariſſa? and you now ſee how much you have been impoſed upon."

Mrs. Seaton knew well (from Sir Thomas's letter, and from a few hints ſhe had

received from her brother) who they were ſpeaking of, but did not think it adviſable to acquaint them with it; therefore, affecting a ſurpriſe, "Have the goodneſs," ſaid ſhe, "to let me bear a part in your converſation; who is this Theodore you are ſpeaking of?"

Freeman was about to reply, when a ſervant entered and announced Mr. St. Aubin.

Auguſta would have left the room, as ſhe was in her travelling dreſs, but Mrs. Seaton prevented her: "Never mind St. Aubin," ſaid ſhe; "I am ſure you muſt have ſeen him before."

"I have frequently heard you mention his name," replied Auguſta, "but was never in his company."

St. Aubin entered the room. Mrs. Seaton introduced him to Auguſta; and Freeman

Freeman was ſlightly acquainted with him.

After ſome general converſation, "You appear dull," ſaid St. Aubin, addreſſing himſelf to Freeman.

Freeman made no reply, but walked about the room in viſible agitation.

"I hope," ſaid Mr. St. Aubin, addreſſing himſelf to Mrs. Seaton, "all your friends are well in the country?"

"Perfectly well, I thank you: my nephew is only diſturbed on account of ſome ill treatment he has met with from a ſtranger." Then turning to Freeman, "You were going," ſaid ſhe, "to acquaint me concerning it; who is this Theodore?"

"The devil himſelf cannot tell," replied Freeman; "ſome ſcoundrel that has been advertiſed, and a hundred

pounds reward offered for his apprehenſion."

"What is this?" cried St. Aubin eagerly; "was he a felon, or left his friends?—I think I remember hearing ſomething of it."

Freeman did not immediately reply; and as St. Aubin appeared anxious, Auguſta recapitulated the circumſtance.

"Can you form no idea," reſumed St. Aubin, "where he is to be found?"

"No," cried Freeman; "the villain will take eſpecial care I ſhall not be made acquainted with his reſidence."

"You ſay," reſumed St. Aubin, turning to Auguſta, "he was ſeen this afternoon at an inn in Maidenhead, accompanied by a young lady?"

Auguſta replied in the affirmative.

"Bleſs me!" cried St. Aubin, ſtarting up,

up, "ſpeaking of the country reminds me I have ſome buſineſs to tranſact with a gentleman this evening who leaves town early in the morning." Then, making his obeiſance, retired.

"Do you not think," ſaid Auguſta, "that Mr. St. Aubin paid uncommon attention to the recital, and appeared wonderfully concerned?"

"I ſcarcely noticed him," replied Freeman.

"It is his uſual method of attending to a ſtory," ſaid Mrs. Seaton; "I am confident he knows nothing of the fellow: if he had he would have mentioned it, as he is far from being a reſerved character."

This remark put an end to the converſation reſpecting St. Aubin, and the reſidue of the evening was taken up with

various conjectures relative to Theodore and Clariſſa.

About noon, on the enſuing day, as Freeeman, Auguſta, and Mrs. Seaton, were ſitting in converſation, a ſervant entered, and informed them Sir Thomas Blandford was below.

"By all means ſhew him up," ſaid Freeman.

The ſervant obeyed.

"I have uſed him ill," continued Freeman, "by ſuſpecting him wrongfully, and inſulting him with thoſe ſuſpicions, for which I muſt apologiſe."

"Let me quit the room," ſaid Auguſta.

"On no account," rejoined Mrs. Seaton; "Sir Thomas is my intimate friend. I am poſitive you will eſteem him when you are better acquainted."

"I know

" I know too much of him," replied Auguſta, " ever to eſteem him."

Sir Thomas entered: he ſtarted on ſeeing Freeman.

Mrs. Seaton welcomed him to town, and introduced her viſitors.

Freeman advanced, and having acknowledged his error, declared he was ſorry that he ſhould have entertained ſo unworthy an opinion of him.

Sir Thomas appeared confounded, but deſired he would think no more of it.

" You appear unuſually dull," ſaid Mrs. Seaton; " have you left all your vivacity in the country?"

" I am fatigued with travelling," replied Sir Thomas; and then attempted a ſmile, contrary to his feelings.

CHAP. VIII.

SIR Thomas travelled poſt from Briſtol, and reached the houſe near Reading about three hours after Clariſſa and Sophia were gone.

He was filled with anxious hope, and his deſires inflamed to the higheſt pitch.

Nothing could equal his diſappointment, when he was informed Clariſſa had effected her eſcape.

He threw himſelf in a chair, and gave way to a train of reflections that made him worſe.

The men had only anſwered his enquiry concerning Clariſſa; he knew nothing of Sophia being gone till he deſired a ſer-

a ſervant to attend him with a key to her apartment.

The ſervant appeared confounded: Sir Thomas repeated the order. "She is gone," replied the maid; "it was her father who reſcued them both."

This reply benumbed the faculties of Sir Thomas; he ſtood like a ſtatue, as if he had neither life nor motion: at length he reſumed his ſeat, and deſired the ſervant to quit the room.

He now took a review of paſt occurrences; the veil at once fell from his eyes. Till this period he knew not the nature of his attachment for Sophia; he had been hurried into exceſſes by unruly paſſions, that had kept him in ignorance reſpecting the ſtate of his heart, and made him conclude ſhe was more an object of deſire than affection.

Hitherto he had looked on her as his miſtreſs; for that intent he poſſeſſed her, and as ſuch he had retained her.

Her abſence plainly convinced him ſhe was neceſſary to his happineſs: he called to his mind her conduct, from the time he firſt addreſſed her; the tenderneſs with which ſhe had always treated him, till he put it out of her power by his conduct, which gained her reſentment; but even this reſentment on her ſide made her appear more lovely in his eyes. It reminded him ſhe had never been a willing miſtreſs, but ſubmitted to his careſſes through imperious neceſſity.

He recollected ſhe was always in tears, was never ſeen to ſmile, and many a morning when he awoke, and miſſed her from his bed, he obſerved her ſitting dreſſed in the chamber, it being impoſſible for her

her to get out, the door being always locked on the outside by the servant, consistent with his order.

He remembered likewise her altered person, her emaciated form, the effects of never-ceasing sorrow; and afforded him strong corroborative proof that her heart abhorred the transaction.

He rung the bell; a servant attended: "Did Sophia," said he, "leave no message for me?"

"None," replied the maid.

"What, not one word?" said he, and heaved a sigh.

"We found a piece of paper," replied the maid, "on which are a few words written with a pencil."

"Where is it?" cried he hastily.

The maid produced it.

Sophia had taken the opportunity,

while her father was ſearching the houſe for Clariſſa, to write it; and not having either pen or ink in the room, made uſe of her pencil.

Sir Thomas eagerly ſeized it from the maid, and read as follows:

'Farewel, Sir Thomas; dear to my 'heart, but deteſtable to my recollec- 'tion!—Fear nothing from me: I can 'die; but cannot ſeek revenge.'

"Ah, my God!" exclaimed he, "what have I not done!—How have I deſtroyed this lovely girl, who I ought to have protected!—What would I give for an interview with her!—What would I not forfeit, if I could undo that which is paſt!" Then turning to the ſervant, who was ſtill in the room, "Shew me to her chamber," ſaid he; "there will I ſpend this night, in ruminating on her worth."

The

The maid conducted him.

The first object that attracted his notice was the piano, with which she had frequently passed a solitary hour; a note-book laying upon it open, he viewed the song; it was the Lamentation of Mary queen of Scots.

Beside the book lay a few lines of her own composing, and seemingly for the same tune.

He took it up, and read as follows:

"Ah! why does my heart still repine
For the object it ought to detest!
Why thus am I loth to resign
The passion that tortures my breast?
Why still at his name do I sigh,
As if 'twould afford me relief!
Since nothing is left but to die,
A martyr—to love and to grief!"

These

Theſe few lines, although of ſimple conſtruction, contained a ſubject that cut him to the ſoul: he read it a hundred times, then played the tune on the piano and accompanied it with the words, till his feelings were wrought up to ſuch an exceſs, that he threw himſelf upon the bed in an agony of woe, and burſt into tears.

In this ſituation he lay for ſome hours, loſt in thought, till a ſervant, who was ſurpriſed at his long ſilence, tapped at the door, and enquired if he would have any thing dreſſed for his ſupper.

"Nothing," replied Sir Thomas; "leave me for the night."

In fact, his heart was too full; he could not think of eating, but remained till the morning, without taking off his clothes.

As

As ſoon as the dawn of day approached he aroſe, and began ſeriouſly to conſider what ſtep was beſt to be purſued.

He had made propoſals of marriage to Sir Charles in behalf of Auguſta; but having examined his heart, and diſcovered a ſentiment which hitherto was unknown to him, he could not endure the idea of an act that muſt leſſen the affection of Sophia; yet ſtill he felt a neceſſity of carrying a fair outſide.

He knew Sir Charles had written to Mrs. Seaton in his behalf; he had likewiſe been the means of her ſending an invitation to Auguſta; he therefore determined to addreſs her, and if he met with a refuſal upon his firſt application, which he had every reaſon to expect, then to take the firſt opportunity of going in ſearch of Sophia; not that he intended

to

to marry her: ſhe was a farmer's daughter; ſuch a match would be degrading to his pride, and would ſubject him to the ridicule of his young friends. She had likewiſe been his miſtreſs, and although he was aware her heart never approved of the tranſaction, yet the world was ignorant of this.

He poſſeſſed a latent hope that he ſhould be able to prevail on her to live with him on his own terms; and thus he argued:—"Firſt," ſaid he, "ſhe has a ſtrong and grounded attachment for me; an affection of ſome years' duration is not eaſily done away; this will prevent her from thinking of another: and if," ſaid he, "ſhe ever were to harbour ſuch an idea, the ſituation I have reduced her to will prevent her from putting it in execution."

Another

Another reflection was, that being thus reduced ſhe had now nothing further to dread. "Query," ſaid he, "in which ſituation will ſhe appear to moſt advantage in the eyes of the world, the one ſhe is at preſent in, ruined and forſaken; or protected by me and ſupported in affluence? No doubt ſhe is with her father in ſome wretched apartment, no ſervant to attend her, and ſcarcely ſufficient food to ſupport nature. If, then, I place her father in a ſituation ſimilar to what I deprived him of, ſuch an act will enſure his gratitude.

"If, likewiſe, in addition to this, I ſettle a few hundreds a year on her, ſhe certainly then can have no objection; neither can her father.

"He muſt be aware it will be impoſſible for me to marry her; and what is

marriage

marriage after all? it is but a ceremony, and frequently occaſions more miſery than happineſs."

Thus argued Sir Thomas, without calling to his aid one virtuous ſentiment to oppoſe againſt his doctrine.

Having made up his mind reſpecting his future plan, he ſet off for London, and reached Mrs. Seaton's as before mentioned.

Sir Thomas took the firſt opportunity after Freeman had left the room to ſpeak with Auguſta in the preſence of Mrs. Seaton.

"Miſs Freeman," ſaid he, "permit me to acquaint you with the cauſe of my viſit here this day.

"During my ſhort acquaintance with Sir Charles, I was able to diſcover that there was no attachment on your ſide towards

wards your couſin, and the event juſtified my ſupicions.

" I then made bold to ſolicit your father in my behalf, that I might have his permiſſion to addreſs you, to which requeſt he gave his hearty concurrence.

" Having the honour to be acquainted with Mrs. Seaton, I took the liberty of waiting on you here to prefer my ſuit, and to declare—"

" Stop, Sir Thomas," ſaid Auguſta, interrupting him; " I never can attend to this ſubject from you. My father, I am confident, has not heard the whole particulars relative to Mr. Bridport and his daughter; if he had, he certainly would not ſo readily have acquieſced with your propoſal.

" It is a circumſtance of that nature, which ought, and always will prevent me from

from attending to any offer you may have to make, unleſs it be to withdraw from my company; this would give me far greater ſatisfaction than any other."

"Auguſta," cried Mrs. Seaton, "how can you treat Sir Thomas in this manner? what objection can you have? Who is this Bridport and his daughter? ſome fooliſh love affair I ſuppoſe of no import."

Auguſta thought there would be an indelicacy in explaining the particulars; and Sir Thomas, whoſe feelings were conſiderably hurt on account of Sophia, could not force his tongue to utter any thing in diſparagement of her, which he muſt have done had he undertook to defend himſelf, and therefore both remained ſilent.

Mrs. Seaton having waited half a minute for a reply, "If I may be allowed to

to give my opinion," continued ſhe, "this is not the reaſon that dictates your refuſal; pray, Sir Thomas, do you know any thing of a ſtrolling gentleman who viſited at my brother's, and paſſed by the name of Theodore?"

"I have ſeen him," replied Sir Thomas; "he certainly was an impoſter."

"You have been informed, I preſume," rejoined Mrs. Seaton, "that he ran away with a Miſs Leſley?"

Sir Thomas bluſhed.

"Auguſta," continued ſhe, "detected them together yeſterday in the afternoon."

"You ſurpriſe me!" cried Sir Thomas; then turning to Auguſta, enquired, with great eagerneſs, if there was any other perſon in their company.

"None,"

"None," replied Auguſta; but why this eagerneſs on your part? this evident ſurpriſe! I thought you were always of opinion it would be the caſe, and even ventured to predict as much."

Sir Thomas ſaw his error, and endeavoured to reaſſume a compoſure. "I could have no motive," ſaid he, "but a deſire to convince thoſe who ventured to oppoſe my opinion."

"What motive," ſaid Mrs. Seaton, "could Sir Thomas poſſibly have in aſking a plain queſtion? I ſee how it is, you want to find an excuſe for a vagrant; it is the recollection of him that prompts you to behave in this manner."

"I beg your pardon," reſumed Sir Thomas ſarcaſtically, "you certainly miſtake; Miſs Freeman has too much good

ſenſe

ſenſe to throw away a thought upon ſuch a worthleſs fellow; I cannot imagine how you could ſuſpect as much."

Auguſta felt the full force of this reply, more particularly as ſhe beheld the ſarcaſtic ſmile that accompanied it; and therefore replied, "It is the recollection of your character, Sir Thomas, that prompts my refuſal, and obliges me to look on your propoſal as an inſult; my aunt, therefore, muſt excuſe me from remaining any longer in your company," and immediately quitted the room.

A ſhort ſilence enſued.

"I am extremely concerned," ſaid Mrs. Seaton, "that a niece of mine ſhould thus demean herſelf: be aſſured her conduct to you originates in the fellow we have been ſpeaking of."

"It does not affect me in the leaſt," replied

replied Sir Thomas; "I ſhall pay no further attention to it.

"If Miſs Freeman had approved of my propoſal, I ſhould have been happy in the alliance; but, as it is otherwiſe, I ſhall conſole myſelf with the reflection, that the world is not ſo barren of women, nor my fortune ſo contemptible, but I ſhall ſtand a chance of meeting with better ſucceſs elſewhere.

"At the ſame time permit me to add, that I ſhall ever retain a grateful ſenſe of the obligation I am under to you for the trouble you have given yourſelf in this buſineſs."

Mrs. Seaton again regretted the cauſe from whence this diſappointment originated, and made every apology in behalf of her family that ſhe could ſuggeſt, after which Sir Thomas withdrew.

She

She then ſent for Auguſta, who ſhe ſeverely reprimanded for her conduct to Sir Thomas, threw out ſome unpleaſant alluſions reſpecting Theodore, and concluded by informing her ſhe ſhould immediately make Sir Charles acquainted with it.

CHAP. IX.

TIME now paſſed on heavily with Auguſta; her aunt, who conſidered her highly culpable, ſcarcely articulated a ſentence during the day.

On the following morning Auguſta, to relieve her ſpirits, determined to walk out and purchaſe a few trifles ſhe ſtood in need of.

Mrs. Seaton offered her carriage, but Auguſta refuſed; alleging, as the day was fine, ſhe ſhould prefer walking: ſhe therefore left her aunt's, attended by a ſervant, and proceeded towards Bond-ſtreet.

Theodore, who had taken up his reſidence at the Glouceſter coffee-houſe till

he

he ſhould adopt ſome plan for his future conduct, being tired of remaining in the houſe, endeavoured to beguile a melancholy hour by walking.

He had ſcarcely been out ten minutes, before he met Auguſta.

She bluſhed, but determined on paſſing him without notice.

Theodore obſerved the confuſion ſhe was in; but not knowing the affection ſhe poſſeſſed, did not attribute it to the cauſe from whence it originated. He concluded ſhe muſt have been made acquainted with his innocence reſpecting Clariſſa, and that her confuſion was occaſioned by her ill-founded ſuſpicions; to this cauſe he likewiſe attributed her evident wiſh to avoid him.

Theodore was reſolved to have ſome converſation with her; he approached

her, and taking hold of her hand, requeſted ſhe would explain the meaning of the note left for Clariſſa.

Auguſta drew her hand forcibly from him, with marked diſapprobation ſeated in her countenance.

"Pardon me," ſaid Theodore, "it is not my meaning to renew a ſubject that you repeatedly informed me was an inſult; but I cannot endure you ſhould harbour ſo infamous an opinion of me as that note conveyed: ſo far from ſeducing Clariſſa from the cottage, I was in ſome meaſure her protector."

Auguſta, ſurpriſed at this declaration, deſired he would explain himſelf.

Theodore ſtated his reaſons for quitting Somers; gave an account of his journey till he met Clariſſa; and concluded by obſerving, that the guilty party was one whom

whom ſhe ſhould have had no ſuſpicion of.

"Who is it you hint at?" ſaid Auguſta.

"Freeman," replied Theodore.

"How ſhallow is this artifice!" reſumed Auguſta contemptuouſly; "I am aſhamed to think I have been prevailed upon to liſten to you: Edward would ſcorn the tranſaction."

Theodore entreated ſhe would attend to what further he had to advance. He then related the account as he received it from Clariſſa; and concluded with informing her of his meeting with Freeman's ſervant, who was in purſuit of her.

"This cannot be true," replied Auguſta; "Edward is now in town, and in a ſtate of the utmoſt anxiety on her account."

"Oh, I don't doubt it," rejoined Theodore: "ſhe has, thank Heaven, eſcaped him; for, notwithſtanding the ſpecious pretence made uſe of, that he wanted to force her into a marriage, it is plain enough ſuch was not his intention, as he ordered her to be conveyed to a houſe where Clariſſa, from circumſtances, was ſatisfied he had a girl in keeping."

"I will hear no more," cried Auguſta; "it is infamous in you to make uſe of theſe inſinuations againſt a man who would bluſh for ſuch a conduct." Then beckoning to the ſervant, ſhe walked on a few paces, and turned into a perfumer's ſhop.

Theodore, who wiſhed, if poſſible, to convince her of his innocence, ſtopt at a printſeller's window till ſhe ſhould return.

Auguſta, in the mean time, ruminated on what had paſſed. Theodore had related

lated his ſtory with an air of truth that would have carried conviction with it, had he not charged her couſin with the crime. After a few minutes' reſpite, which calmed her ſpirits, ſhe repented having parted from him ſo haſtily, without giving him a caution to avoid Freeman, who had ſo frequently vowed to be revenged if he fell in his way.

She could not forget how dear he was to her recollection; and although ſhe durſt not give him any encouragement, in conſequence of the many unpleaſant reports raiſed againſt him, yet ſhe was truly anxious for his ſafety.

As ſhe left the ſhop ſhe obſerved him waiting, and, forgetting her reſentment, "Theodore," ſaid ſhe, "Mr. Somers, who is my intimate friend, has a high reſpect for you; on his account, there-

fore, I think it my duty to give you a caution:—avoid Edward:—he conceives you guilty, and determines on revenge. If he ſhould come in your ſight, ſhun him."

"Villain!" cried Theodore, "does he think to eſcape the odium he deſerves by ſtigmatizing me behind my back? but we ſhall meet, I truſt; and I have no doubt, in ſo juſt a cauſe, I ſhall triumph."

At this juncture a carriage paſſed, and Auguſta curtſied to the perſon in it.

In a moment it ſtopt, and Mr. St. Aubin had his hand on the door for the purpoſe of alighting.

While the carriage was drawing up, three men approached Theodore, and took hold of his arms. "Your moſt obedient," ſaid one of them; "what, we have found you at laſt."

Theodore

Theodore attempted to reſiſt; but they called a hackney-coach, and put him in.

A crowd having aſſembled, the men informed them it was an arreſt, which ſatisfied their enquiries.

Two of the men went into the coach with Theodore, while the third whiſpered to the coachman, who immediately drove off; after which the man ran with ſpeed a contrary way.

This was executed in leſs than a minute; while Auguſta and the ſervant were ſpectators, as likewiſe was St. Aubin, who now alighted from his carriage, and offered to convey her home.

Auguſta conſented, being in ſuch a ſtate of agitation as ſcarcely to know what ſhe did.

They preſently arrived at Mrs. Seaton's.

During the ride St. Aubin aſked her ſeveral queſtions reſpecting the young man ſhe was in converſation with; but being extremely faint, and obliged to have frequent recourſe to her ſmelling-bottle, it prevented her from attending to him.

When ſhe reached her aunt's, and had in ſome meaſure recovered, St Aubin aſked her what the young man ſaid when his carriage ſtopt.

"Nothing," replied Auguſta.

"Did he not mention my name?" reſumed St. Aubin.

"I did not hear him," replied Auguſta.

"Do you know his name," ſaid St. Aubin, "or any of his relations?"

"He goes by a borrowed name," replied Auguſta, "and has carefully concealed

ceaſed his own; have you then any knowledge of him?"

"Not much," replied St. Aubin; "and what little I have is not to his advantage. I remember him as a clerk to a merchant in the city, who he has defrauded; therefore, ſhould you ſee him again, I would have you ſhun his ſociety."

Auguſta ſighed and turned pale: "Do you know," ſaid ſhe, "to what amount he has defrauded his employer?"

"He has taken ſome caſh," replied St. Aubin, "and likewiſe ſome family miniatures ſet in diamonds, which are worth upwards of five hundred pounds."

"Good Heaven!" ſaid Auguſta, "he ſhewed me thoſe miniatures, and ſaid he revered them, as they were the repreſentation of his parents."

St. Aubin appeared diſconcerted, and

walked to the window. "Did he mention the name of his parents?" reſumed St. Aubin.

"Never," replied Auguſta; "nor the name of his relations: he ſaid he had a particular reaſon for keeping it a ſecret."

"He has no parents," rejoined St. Aubin, "but is a child of charity."

"You ſurpriſe me," reſumed Auguſta; "he has received a very liberal education."

"More ſhame for him to ill uſe the friend that gave it him," rejoined St. Aubin.

The recital of theſe circumſtances had ſo much oppreſſed Auguſta, and Mrs. Seaton entering the room at this time, ſhe retired, leaving St. Aubin and her aunt to converſe together.

St. Aubin related the preceding ſcene

to

to Mrs. Seaton, which ſhe eagerly attended to for the purpoſe of making a few animadverſions on it to her niece; and likewiſe to communicate it to Sir Charles. In which converſation I ſhall leave them, while I attend to Theodore.

The coachman drove ſlowly, went up the New Road, turned through Kentiſh-town, followed his courſe up to Highgate, after which he deſcended the hill, and drove through Holloway to Iſlington.

Theodore was in great agitation, and aſked a variety of queſtions concerning where they were taking him.

"You are with your friends," replied the men, "therefore make your mind perfectly eaſy. It was the only method that could be adopted to place you beyond the power of thoſe you have moſt reaſon to fear."

Having

Having reached Iſlington, they ſtopt at the door of a ſmall public-houſe.

A gentleman made his appearance, and beckoned to the men, who immediately left the coach and handed the ſtranger in. Having ſeated himſelf, he deſired the coachman to drive to Kenſington. As they proceeded, the gentleman aſked Theodore if he was the ſame perſon lately at Cliffdown-lodge in Glouceſterſhire, the ſeat of Mr. Somers, and who paſſed by the name of Theodore.

Theodore anſwered in the affirmative.

"Your uncle," continued the gentleman, "has gained intelligence of your being in London, and is anxious to get you out of the way before your parents return to England, as their arrival is daily expected. Singular as the treatment you have met with this morning may appear, yet

yet it was the only plan that could be deviſed, as he has an eye upon the perſon he employed to take you.

" My advice is, that you leave London immediately, and return from whence you came.

" Mr. Somers is your friend; with him you may remain in ſafety. Place a firm reliance on him; and, if you ſhould be diſcovered, apply to the perſon who firſt adviſed your departure, and he will find ſome means to ſet you free. Here," continued he, " is a purſe with an hundred guineas; take it, and purſue your journey, but on no account viſit the Glouceſter coffee-houſe."

Theodore requeſted he would explain to whom he ſtood indebted for this act of friendſhip.

" There you muſt excuſe me," replied the

the gentleman; "the knowledge of it can render you no ſervice, and may, if repeated, do your friend an injury."

"Can you," ſaid Theodore, "ſatisfy me who it was that lodged the information againſt me? that, by ſo doing, I may know whom to avoid."

"It was my intention," replied the gentleman: "her name is Auguſta Freeman."

The heart of Theodore ſunk within him on the receipt of this intelligence; he could not refrain from ſhedding a tear, and drew out his handkerchief to wipe it away. "Is is poſſible," ſaid he, "that Auguſta could act with ſuch wanton cruelty?"

"How is this!" rejoined the ſtranger; "why are you diſtreſſed on hearing the information came from her?"

"Alas!"

"Alas!" ſaid Theodore, "I loved her with ſincerity, and concluded her far too generous to adopt a conduct ſo malicious."

"And yet ſhe has done it," rejoined the gentleman: "it will teach you, in return, to deſpiſe her as you ought: a conduct ſo deſpicable in her, ought to obliterate your ill-placed attachment.—Truſt me, ſhe is infinitely beneath your notice. I preſume ſhe has conſidered herſelf inſulted by your addreſſes, and has taken this ſtep to be revenged on you:—never, for the future, have any thing to ſay to a revengeful character."

The coach having arrived at Kenſington, they alighted.

Theodore ordered a poſt-chaiſe, and having taken leave of the gentleman, purſued his way to Briſtol.

I ſhall

I ſhall now return to Mrs. Seaton's.

Mr. St. Aubin remained with her about a quarter of an hour, while he blackened the character of Theodore, and adviſed her if he ſhould attempt to gain a footing in her houſe that ſhe would forbid him; but concluded by giving it as his opinion from what he ſaw in the morning that he was taken into cuſtody for the robbery, and, if ſuch were the caſe, he moſt probably would accept the offer of being ſent abroad in preference to taking his trial for the offence.

When Mr. St. Aubin was gone, Mrs. Seaton ſent for Auguſta, and ſeverely reprimanded her for holding a converſation with ſo notorious a character as Theodore, or for remaining one moment in his company, after the knowledge ſhe had

had of his infamous conduct reſpecting the young woman who he ſeduced from her home.

At this juncture Freeman entered.

Auguſta had intended to ſpeak ſeriouſly with Edward concerning the account ſhe received from Theodore, but the relation given by St. Aubin made her conclude it was totally without foundation.

While Mrs. Seaton was acquainting Edward with what had paſſed, the poſt arrived, and the ſervant entering with letters, put an end to the converſation.

Freeman opened his letter which came from Somers, and after reading a few lines, "Clariſſa virtuous, and Theodore innocent!" ſaid he; "impoſſible!"

Auguſta, who had peruſed hers, rejoined, "It is abſolutely true, as far as relates to Clariſſa."

"Why

" Why has he not mentioned the guilty party?" rejoined Freeman; " he knows nothing what it is to feel as I do."

" He is fearful of a duel taking place," replied Auguſta, " and therefore has omitted it."

" By your reply," rejoined Freeman, " I ſhould conſider you are acquainted with the particulars; I will poſitively ſee the letter."

Auguſta ran out of the room, and was able to commit it to the flames before Edward reached her.

" If you will not tell me who it is," reſumed Freeman, " will you acquaint me where to find her?"

" He did not mention where ſhe reſides," replied Auguſta, " but ſaid he had ſent for her to his houſe. I think," continued ſhe, " Clariſſa cannot accept his

his invitation conſiſtent with propriety. It would appear ſingular in the eyes of the world, as Somers is yet but a young man, and ſeparated from his wife."

"Certainly it would," rejoined Freeman; "I cannot imagine how he could think of making ſuch a requeſt: he has likewiſe invited me, concluding ſhe will accept his offer; but I know Clariſſa better, and therefore ſhall not leave town till I hear further."

"You muſt not attach a blame to Mr. Somers," reſumed Auguſta; "you forget Mrs. Bentley by her will committed her to his care; he means to fix her in ſome private family."

Auguſta now opened a letter which came from her father; he was ſilent on the conduct of Sir Thomas; profeſſed himſelf happy that ſhe had arrived ſafe

in

in town, where he expected ſhortly to be employed on a pleaſant buſineſs, relative to Somers; and then gave a brief account from whence his ſorrows had originated. In doing this he mentioned the name of Sternhold.

"Sternhold!" ſaid Auguſta, "ſurely I have heard that name." Then turning to Mrs. Seaton, aſked her if ſhe was not acquainted with ſuch a family.

"I am not intimate with them," replied Mrs. Seaton; "we met at a friend's houſe, and I have once been there on a tea-party. It is rather rude of me, as I ſhould have invited them in return: they are worthy characters."

"Have they a daughter?" reſumed Auguſta.

"They have," replied Mrs. Seaton: "ſhe is married to a worthleſs fellow, poor

poor unhappy creature!—ſhe is greatly to be pitied."

"I am inclined to think you have been miſinformed," reſumed Auguſta: "will you have the goodneſs to ſtate your reaſons for ſo ſaying."

"A mere beggar," reſumed Mrs. Seaton, "whoſe eſtate turned out to be worth nothing, married her for the purpoſe of obtaining a comfortable home at Sternhold's: he had the addreſs to cheat them out of a conſiderable ſum of money, and that being ſpent, he has ſent their daughter home, with a child, for them to ſupport; ſince which, I underſtand, he has become affluent, and takes no notice of her."

"There is always two ways of telling a ſtory," reſumed Auguſta. "It will ſurpriſe you when I relate, that the Sternholds

holds have done all in their power to create a ſeparation between them; and that her huſband, if he thought his wife had the ſmalleſt affection for him, would be happy to receive her."

"His wife, poor creature," rejoined Mrs. Seaton, "when I ſaw her laſt, was the picture of ſorrow. I am ſure ſhe has too great a regard for the fellow."

"Her name is Somers," reſumed Auguſta.

"Yes, yes," ſaid Mrs. Seaton; "it is the ſame perſon you mean."

"She is the wife of my particular friend, Mr. Somers of Cliffdown-lodge," rejoined Auguſta; "and to convince you how much you have been impoſed on, I will read you a few lines from my father's letter.

"'The Sternholds, by falſehoods and infamous

infamous miſrepreſentations, dictated by malice that would diſgrace a fiend, took every opportunity of poiſoning the mind of their daughter, and alienating her affections from her huſband; after which, taking advantage of his misfortunes, they offered their houſe as a lure to draw her from her duty; proteſting, at the ſame time, that they would render her no aſſiſtance if ſhe obſtinately determined on remaining with him. Mrs. Somers fell into the ſnare, and cruelly abandoned him, taking with her his infant daughter.'"

"You ſee," ſaid Freeman, who had lent an attentive ear, "how much you have been deceived. I am one that has witneſſed his ſorrow: I know that he adores his wife, and regrets her loſs; ſo

great an effect has it had on him, that he is reduced to a ſkeleton."

"If this be the caſe," rejoined Mrs. Seaton, "I certainly have been groſsly impoſed on; and yet I had my intelligence from an intimate friend of Mrs. Sternhold."

"Very probably," replied Auguſta; "they will naturally put the beſt gloſs on their conduct. But you were ſaying that you ought to invite them in return for your viſit: I wiſh to ſee Mrs. Somers, and have ſome converſation with her; will you therefore oblige me by requeſting her company?"

"I muſt invite the Sternholds likewiſe," replied Mrs. Seaton, "or it will appear ſingular. Let me conſider:—Friday I am engaged; Saturday I expect a friend. Suppoſe I ſay Tueſday next?"

The

The day being ſettled, Freeman retired to acquaint Somers by letter of the circumſtance, and to offer his ſervice, if there ſhould be an occaſion, in reſtoring her; as likewiſe to requeſt he would acquaint him with Clariſſa's addreſs; and deſiring an anſwer by return of poſt.

CHAP. X.

HAVING diſpatched this letter, he waited with the utmoſt anxiety for one in return.

He again felt, in its full force, the attachment he had for Clariſſa, which the conduct he was led to imagine ſhe adopted had not been able to do away.

He fled to Auguſta for the purpoſe of adviſing with her on what method would be the moſt proper to purſue, when he ſhould have obtained her addreſs.

The heart of Auguſta was too much oppreſſed at this time to find leiſure for any other ſubject excepting Theodore. She felt a real pleaſure when ſhe conſidered

dered he had not been guilty of the tranſaction laid to his charge by Sir Thomas, blamed herſelf for having called him a villain in her letter to Clariſſa, and endeavoured to palliate the charge made uſe of againſt him by St. Aubin; therefore, when Freemen went to her for advice, inſtead of anſwering his enquiries, ſhe entered into a converſation concerning the ſubject that was neareſt to her heart.

"Do you not think," ſaid ſhe, "the tale related by St. Aubin is rather improbable?

"He firſt informs me Theodore is a child of charity. If he is, does it not appear ſtrange that he ſhould have received ſo liberal an education, and poſſeſs ſo independent a ſpirit?"

"The independence of his ſpirit," replied Freeman, "originates in his educa-

tion; neither is it in the leaſt ſingular for a youth brought up by charity to complete his ſtudies at an univerſity."

"Very poſſible," reſumed Auguſta: "his foſter-father muſt have been extremely partial to him, or he would not have beſtowed ſuch an expence upon him. I ſhould have imagined the conduct of his friend, in this particular, would have taught him to expect ſomething more than a ſubordinate ſituation in life. If his friend meant to raiſe him to no higher ſtation than a clerk in an office, why did he beſtow this education on him?"

"There is no accounting for theſe things," ſaid Freeman; "the conduct of Theodore may have made him alter his determination in his favour."

"And yet," reſumed Auguſta, "he did not appear to be depraved in principle. I can

I can hardly think that was the caſe; nor can I think he would defraud his friend, who, by acting ſo generouſly by him, had taught him to expect ſome permanent ſupport."

"What motive," ſaid Freeman, "could St. Aubin have in relating an untruth?"

"I know not," replied Auguſta; "but yet it certainly does appear untrue; for if I admit that Theodore really is a child of charity, and that he was wickedly inclined, he muſt have had frequent opportunities, as a clerk in a merchant's counting-houſe (which St. Aubin declares he was), to have defrauded his employer of monies to a conſiderable amount; but, on the contrary, I am informed he took only a ſmall ſum, his principal theft being two miniatures ſet in diamonds, worth above five hundred pounds.

"Thoſe valuable miniatures do not uſually lay in a counting-houſe deſk for clerks to view; he muſt have been very intimate with his employer, and probably high in his confidence, or he would not have been enabled to lay his hands upon them.

"If this be the caſe, how could Theodore, who appears ſo ſenſible a young man, think of loſing his friend for ſuch a trifle; a friend who had thus educated him, and thereby taught him to expect ſomething above mediocrity? Theſe circumſtances," continued Auguſta, "I cannot reconcile with common ſenſe; more particularly when I reflect on the ſituation he was in when Somers firſt beheld him; a ſituation which he did not put on for the purpoſe of exciting his compaſſion. He had walked his ſhoes almoſt from off his feet; had

not

not a ſhilling in his poſſeſſion, nor any thing of value ſave the miniatures; why, therefore, did he not diſpoſe of them? On the contrary, Somers beheld him wiping a tear from his eye as he ſurveyed them; and, when he was driven to an explanation, he declared they were the repreſentation of his parents. He even deſcended to apply for the moſt menial ſituation for ſupport. Would a perſon of his appearance have requeſted this, while he had ſuch valuable trinkets in his poſſeſſion?—No:—he would have converted them into money to ſupply his wants, unleſs he ſet a great ſtore by them; which he would not have done if they had not been the reſemblance of the parties he deſcribed. Beſides which, did not the meſſenger from London declare what Theodore advanced was true?

"When I think of theſe circumſtances," continued Auguſta, "I cannot reconcile myſelf to the belief of the tale recited by St. Aubin."

"I muſt confeſs," rejoined Freeman, "now you review theſe circumſtances, it does appear ſingular; and yet, Mr. St. Aubin is a man whoſe word will paſs in the city for thouſands, and is of ſuch reſpectability that ſhould entitle him to belief."

"There is ſome myſtery in it," rejoined Auguſta, "which I ſhould be happy to unravel."

"I am of the ſame opinion," reſumed Freeman, "and would ſet about it immediately if I could deviſe the means."

"The moſt probable method," rejoined Auguſta, "is to wait on Mr. Quibble

at

at Thaives Inn, the perſon to whom the hand-bill referred."

"You are right," ſaid Freeman, taking up his hat; "my curioſity is ſo much excited, I ſhall not reſt till I am ſatisfied."

Freeman now purſued his way for Thaives Inn, and on enquiring for Mr. Quibble was ſhown into a ſmall office.

A clerk informed him Mr. Quibble was engaged, but aſked him if he could not adviſe him reſpecting the buſineſs he came upon.

Freeman replied he called reſpecting a young man who was advertiſed.

"Who is that?" cried a gruff voice from an adjoining room.

The clerk went to the door, "A perſon," ſaid he, "that has called to ſpeak with me."

The clerk ſeemed in agitation, and taking Freeman into the paſſage, told him that the reference in the hand-bill was certainly at Mr. Quibble's, but the gentleman who would receive the information, if he had any to convey, lived near the exchange.

"I am no informer," rejoined Freeman; "I came to aſk a few queſtions; pray, who is this young man?"

"I really cannot tell," replied the clerk; "but the gentleman I ſhall refer you to, will be able to give you every ſatisfaction. If you will wait here a minute, I will attend you to him."

The clerk returned into the office, and after ſignifying to his employer that a little buſineſs called him out, he accompanied Freeman to a court near the Royal Exchange, and knocking at a private

private door, requeſted to ſpeak with Mr. Solomon.

Freeman was left in a ſmall room while the clerk and Mr. Solomon had ſome converſation; after which the clerk left the houſe, and Freeman was deſired to walk up ſtairs.

"Is your name Quibble?" ſaid Freeman.

"No, ſhir," replied the Jew, "my name is Iſhaac Sholoman at your ſharvice."

Freeman produced the hand-bill.

"Vat," ſaid the Jew, "you vant to lodge de information, to finger de hundred paunds? but de young man iſh taken, ſho you need give yourſhelf no furder trouble."

"Hearkee, Mr. Jew," rejoined Freeman, "let me have none of your inſolence, or I ſhall ſhave your beard for you.

I did

I did not come here as an informer, but merely to aſk who he is, and to render him a ſervice if it lay in my power."

"Vat you ſhay? you vill ſhave my beard?" cried the Jew; "you are vary goot, but my beard ſhall ſtay vere it iſh, nor vill I anſher your idle queſtions.—Vat I ſhuppoſe you are de perſon who ſhent de letter about him before, but did not put your name to it."

Freeman found he had taken a wrong method to acquire any intelligence, and therefore aſſumed a different tone: "I would ſcorn ſuch a practice," ſaid he; "I had too high an opinion of the young man to do him an injury. My name is Freeman; an intimate acquaintance of Mr. Somers at whoſe houſe he reſided; and from the opinion I was able to form of Theodore's conduct, I cannot recon-

cile

cile it with what I have heard from Mr. St. Aubin.

" Are you acquainted wid Mr. Sht. Aubin?" reſumed the Jew.

" I am," replied Freeman.

" I ſhinſherely beg your pardon," ſaid Solomon; " vill you pleaſh to take a ſhair. Mr. Sht. Aubin iſh a vary wordy ſhentleman; vat haſh he told you about de young man?"

Freeman recapitulated it.

" I am afraid," reſumed Solomon, " it iſh all too true."

" Can you inform me," ſaid Freeman, " who it is that Theodore has defrauded?"

" I can tell you noting about it," replied Solomon; " you muſht go to Mr. Sht. Aubin."

" You

"You are a friend of Sht. Aubin's I find," ſaid Freeman.

"Mr. Sht. Aubin iſh my vary goot friend," rejoined Solomon; "I am hiſh broker."

"Had I known as much," reſumed Freeman, "I would not have troubled you. My only reaſons were theſe: Theodore has been introduced to my family; and if perchance he ſhould again have an opportunity of viſiting it, I ſhould not think proper to encourage him, if what Mr. St. Aubin relates be true."

Solomon walked about the room, and appeared at a loſs what to ſay; at length he reſumed, "You know dis young man, and vaſh vary intimate vid him?"

"I was," replied Freeman.

"Are you any ting related to Shir Sharles

Sharles Freeman," ſaid Solomon, " vere de young man vaſh taken to?"

" I am his nephew," replied Freeman. " Perhaps," continued he, " you are that friend who ſent a meſſenger to him at Cliffdown-lodge to warn him of his danger, and therefore are unwilling to truſt me."

" Vary poſhible," replied the Jew; " de times iſh vary bad, dere iſh no knowing who to truſht."

" I will, if poſſible, enſure your confidence," reſumed Freeman, " by relating more particularly my reaſons for enquiry. Theodore has ventured to addreſs my couſin, the daughter of Sir Charles; now anſwer me, was my family inſulted by his conduct or not?"

" Ah, poor lad," cried the Jew, " I ſhee how it iſh wid him; vat vid perſhecution

cution on von ſhide, and love on de oder, de poor boy will break his heart. And ſho your couſin, believing vat Sht. Aubin told her, informed him vere to find him."

"My couſin," replied Freeman, "would not be guilty of ſuch a tranſaction."

"I know better," rejoined Solomon; "it was through her the boy vaſh taken to-day, and de poor lad knows it."

"If my couſin," rejoined Freeman, "ſaid any thing to St. Aubin that injured him, it was innocently done on her ſide. But come, I ſee you are Theodore's friend; let me have an anſwer to my queſtion."

"Did he not tell you," ſaid the Jew, "dat he had a fader and a moder alive? and ſhould not he conſhult dem?"

"How is this!" cried Freeman; "St. Aubin ſays he is a child of charity, and you

you ſeem to infer that he has parents, whoſe advice ought to be aſked whether he ſhould marry the daughter of Sir Charles Freeman."

"Shay no more," cried the Jew; "vat Mr. Sht. Aubin haſh told you iſh vary true. Mr. Sht. Aubin iſh my vary goot friend; vould you have me loſe my friend?"

"I ſee how it is," reſumed Freeman, "you ſtill doubt me."

"Can you keep de ſhecret?" ſaid the Jew.

"Depend upon me," cried Freeman eagerly.

"Den ſho can I," rejoined Solomon.

"Very well, ſir," ſaid Freeman, "ſince you will not explain, I will try what ſucceſs I can meet with from St. Aubin. I

am

am determined to know if Theodore be guilty or not, and what is become of him."

"Hold," cried the Jew; "you muſht not mention any ting to Sht. Aubin; you muſht not ſhee him. Vat, I ſhuppoſe you vill tell him about de meſhenger I ſhent; you vill ruin de poor boy. I vill ſpeak aſh plain aſh I can: if you meet de poor lad, give him your hand; he haſh a vary goot heart."

"I do not doubt it," replied Freeman, "and that would be a ſufficient recommendation to me; but he muſt poſſeſs ſome other requiſites before I permit him to be acquainted with my couſin on the former footing. Of what family is he? what are his expectations?"

"I ſhee how it iſh," cried the Jew; "you

" you vant to know about de monies. Dere is no knowing people now-a-days; Here vaſh a great houſh failed de oder day. People who we tink is wort a hundred touſand paunds are wort noting. I really cannot tell you."

" You will not tell me," rejoined Freeman.

" You are vary rude," cried the Jew. " You ſhee my ſhituation, and yet you teaſh me: 'tiſh not like a ſhentleman. I cannot truſht a ſhtranger."

" Anſwer me this queſtion, and I will aſk no more," reſumed Freeman; " where is he?"

" I vill write to Mr. Somers," replied Solomon, " and if he tinks it right to tell you, I ſhall den have no objection."

Freeman thanked him.

" Remem-

" Remember," ſaid the Jew, " not von vord to Sht. Aubin, nor to any von dat vill tell him."

Freeman aſſured him that he might firmly rely on him, and then departed.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

THE moment Freeman returned, Auguſta requeſted he would acquaint her with what information he had obtained.

"You are certainly right," ſaid he, "in your conjecture: Theodore is not the character St. Aubin repreſents him." He then related the principal part of the converſation that had paſſed.

"You aſtoniſh me!" ſaid Auguſta. "What a myſterious buſineſs!—But pray," continued ſhe, "what account did he give of his being taken to-day?"

"He informs me," replied Freeman, "that he was apprehended in conſequence

quence of the intelligence you conveyed to St. Aubin."

"Edward," ſaid Auguſta, "do not wound my feelings: can you ſuppoſe I would endeavour to injure him?"

"I remember," reſumed Freeman, "you told him that he was at the town of Maidenhead in the afternoon; and you may recollect St. Aubin immediately left us, pretending he had ſome buſineſs with a gentleman who was to leave town early in the morning. No doubt he ſent in purſuit of him, and has, through the knowledge of this circumſtance, been able to take him. The Jew declares that you had an ill opinion of Theodore, in conſequence of St. Aubin's repreſentation, and that you informed him where he was to be found, on purpoſe to have him

him taken: and this he further ſays, Theodore is made acquainted with it."

"Edward," ſaid Auguſta, "have compaſſion on my feelings: think what paſſes in my breaſt during this recital!—Get me a glaſs of cold water."

Freeman inſtantly obeyed.

In a few minutes ſhe proceeded.—"What will Theodore think of me?—Firſt, my letter to Clariſſa, calling him a villain; and afterwards to act on this principle!—Where is he?—Can I write to him, or can you write?—I never can endure that he ſhould harbour this ill opinion of me."

"I know not where he is," replied Freeman; "the Jew refuſes to inform me."

"Then write a letter," reſumed Au-

guſta, " ſtating the particulars, and give it to the Jew; he will forward it to him."

" Are you not aware," rejoined Freeman, " that this would be going too far? Conſider for a moment your ſituation, and then I am confident you will not requeſt it. The Jew promiſed to acquaint Somers where he is; I ſhall take the earlieſt opportunity of requeſting Somers to acquaint me with his addreſs. It is now too late to ſend a letter, but I will write by to-morrow's poſt, and we ſhall have an anſwer on Monday. I ſhall then ſee Theodore; he will naturally mention the circumſtance to me, which will put it in my power to explain the truth, without wounding your pride, or leſſening you either in his eſtimation or your own."

Auguſta

Auguſta ſaw the neceſſity there was for adopting this plan, and as no other alternative preſented itſelf ſhe was obligated to ſubmit.

Time now paſſed heavily on, and every hour appeared an age, both to Freeman and Auguſta, till they ſhould receive a letter from Somers.

The day arrived on which Freeman expected an anſwer to his letter concerning Clariſſa; but he was diſappointed.

A thouſand times he determined to ſet off for Briſtol; but Auguſta prevailed on him to defer his journey till Monday, as moſt probably Somers had not received his letter in time to anſwer it by return of poſt.

At length the wiſhed-for Monday arrived, and with it the letter; of which the following is a copy:

'DEAR FRIEND,

'THE intelligence conveyed by your 'letter, reſpecting my beloved Louiſa, 'greatly ſurpriſes me. It was my inten- 'tion to have troubled Sir Charles with 'this unpleaſant buſineſs, but am ſincere- 'ly happy you have offered to take it on 'yourſelf, as I conſider you far more ca- 'pable of carrying it into effect, accord- 'ing to my inclinations, than he would 'be. Auguſta will poſſibly have an op- 'portunity of aſcertaining my Louiſa's 'ſentiments: if ſhe ſhould, and they are 'conſiſtent with my wiſhes, there will, I 'hope, be no occaſion to uſe compulſion, 'unleſs the Sternholds ſhould venture to 'oppoſe her coming. Leſt this ſhould 'be the caſe, I have incloſed you an au- 'thority. Remember, Freeman, to uſe 'it with diſcretion: you are not appre-

'hending

'hending a deſerter, but reſtoring a wife
'to the boſom of her partner. Conſider
'you have the ſoul of Somers in your
'poſſeſſion. Excuſe this caution; think
'what it is to feel as I do, and let it
'plead my apology.

'Nothing ſhould have prevented me
'from being in town at the interview,
'but the truly unpleaſant buſineſs I am
'engaged in, and which I will, at ſome
'future opportunity, unfold to you.

'You ſay you have particular reaſons
'for enquiring where Theodore is to be
'found, and that his friend would write
'to me.

'I have received no letter from any
'friend of his. I certainly do know
'where to find him; but he has bound
'me by a ſolemn promiſe to inform no

'one of his reſidence, not even Auguſta;
'think then if I can with honour give
'the information you require.

'Reſpecting Clariſſa, I did not receive
'your letter in time to anſwer it by return
'of poſt. I am all anxiety on her ac-
'count, as I expected ſhe would have
'arrived here prior to this period. The
'only addreſs I received from her was
'the Glouceſter coffee-houſe; at which
'place ſhe does not reſide, as ſhe inform-
'ed me ſhe would either call or ſend for
'the letter I might write.

'Convey my beſt wiſhes to your ami-
'able couſin, and requeſt her, for my
'ſake, to uſe her influence with Louiſa,
'that ſhe will remain with her at your
'aunt's till it is convenient to undertake
'the journey; and reſt aſſured I remain

'with

'with ſincerity your friend, and greatly 'obliged, &c. &c.

'CHARLES SOMERS.'

The encloſed authority was worded as follows:

'To Edward Freeman, Eſq.

'I HEREBY authoriſe and empower 'you to take the perſon of Louiſa Somers, 'my wife, and Louiſa, my daughter, 'wherever they may be found, and to 'convey them to Cliffdown-lodge, near 'Briſtol, in the county of Glouceſter; 'for ſo doing this ſhall be your ſufficient 'authority.

'CHARLES SOMERS.'

Freeman, having peruſed the letter, delivered it to Auguſta, and immediately

purſued his way to the Glouceſter coffee-houſe.

He was there informed a young lady had called for a letter, but had not ſince been near the place; nor could they give any intelligence of her.

Vexed at this diſappointment, he ſat down and wrote a few lines, deſiring if ſhe ſhould call, they might be delivered to her.

In this letter he expreſſed his own and Auguſta's anxiety on her account, apologiſed for the error that had induced his couſin to leave ſo ſevere a note for her at Maidenhead, and to requeſt ſhe would immediately fly to her on the receipt of it, at the ſame time giving her addreſs.

Having left this letter, he returned with an aching heart to Auguſta.

The day at length arrived that brought

Mrs.

Mrs. Sternhold and her daughter to Mrs. Seaton's, accompanied likewiſe by the child.

When Louiſa entered the room, Auguſta attentively ſurveyed her. She appeared extremely pale, and a languid melancholy was viſible in her countenance.

She called to her recollection the portrait ſhe had ſeen at Cliffdown-lodge, and compared it with the emaciated form before her; from which compariſon it was evident Louiſa was either in an ill ſtate of health, or that a never-ceaſing ſorrow, equal to her huſband's, was preying on her exiſtence.

After the ceremony of introduction had paſſed, "Your daughter," ſaid Mrs. Seaton, addreſſing herſelf to Mrs. Sternhold, "appears much altered for the worſe;

it really concerns me to ſee ſo great a change."

"Do you poſitively think ſo?" ſaid Mrs. Sternhold. "I had flattered myſelf ſhe improved."

"Far from it," reſumed Mrs. Seaton, who purſued this converſation merely to eſtimate Louiſa's ſentiments. "I am afraid her mind is not at eaſe, and if that be the caſe, it is not in the leaſt ſurpriſing."

"My daughter," rejoined Mrs. Sternhold, "has been extremely ill treated by one of the worſt and moſt infamous of his ſpecies; but time, I hope, will teach her to deſpiſe him, as I do."

Mrs. Somers now drew out her handkerchief to wipe a tear from her eye, that the recollection of paſt events occaſioned; and

and Mrs. Sternhold giving a turn to the converſation, the ſubject for the preſent ſubſided.

Auguſta was anxious to have it revived, but had not the courage to introduce it; at length an accident of a trifling nature afforded her the wiſhed-for opportunity.

She had been peruſing the letter from Somers, and when Mrs. Sternhold's name was announced, ſhe put it haſtily in her pocket.

During the evening ſhe drew out her handkerchief, and the letter was brought out with it, which fell at the feet of Mrs. Somers, who picked it up and preſented it to Auguſta; but having caſt her eyes on the direction, ſhe knew the hand-writing.

Her countenance was immediately co-

vered with a crimſon bluſh, and was ſucceeded by a pale languor, which obliged her to have recourſe to her ſmelling-bottle.

Freeman noticed it, and thinking it a favourable opportunity to begin the converſation, "Auguſta," ſaid he, "you ſhould take more care of your letters: I have no doubt but that is an epiſtle from ſome enamoured ſwain."

"The perſon," rejoined Auguſta, "this letter came from is certainly enamoured, but not with me: the man is unfaſhionably in love with his wife."

"I beg your pardon," reſumed Freeman; "I now conclude it is a letter from Mr. Somers: had I known it, I ſhould not have made a jeſt of ſo ſerious a ſubject."

"What is this?" rejoined Mrs. Seaton;

ton; "who is Mr. Somers that you are ſpeaking of?"

Freeman replied by relating his ſtory, as far as it had come to his knowledge; dwelt with great force and ſympathetic energy on the affection he poſſeſſed for Mrs. Somers, and the effect it had on his health; recapitulated his having witneſſed his ſorrows in the Temple of Solitude, in which place he had the portraits of his wife and child, to whom he paid his earthly adoration; and concluded with a ſevere animadverſion on the conduct of thoſe who had eſtranged his wife's affection from him.

Louiſa, unable longer to ſuſtain her feelings, burſt into tears.

Mrs. Sternhold, who had liſtened in ſilence to the recital, now turned pale with anger; her eyes darted fire while

ſhe

ſhe uttered, " I know the villain you are ſpeaking of; he has groſsly impoſed on you. If he had the affection for his wife which he pretends, why does he not claim her? You muſt know he has the power in his own hands, if he thinks proper to exerciſe it; inſtead of which, now he has the means of rendering her every comfort, he has baſely deſerted her."

Freeman was willing to reſcue the character of his friend from the imputation, and therefore replied, " Whatever may have been his reaſons for not demanding her heretofore, I cannot pretend to determine, but he has now changed his mind, and means to take her to himſelf. If you will peruſe this paper," continued he, ſhewing her the order, " you will have no farther occaſion to vilify him on that account."

Mrs.

Mrs. Sternhold peruſed it: "Here is a cruel monſter!" cried ſhe; "no ſooner does he taſte of proſperity than he wiſhes to deprive me of the only comfort of my age, by tearing my daughter away from me." Then ſtarting up, "Louiſa," cried ſhe, "we are betrayed!—I ſhould not have viſited here, if I had thought ſuch an unnatural plan was in agitation."

Mrs. Seaton entreated her to be pacified, and repreſented the impropriety of her conduct in endeavouring to ſeparate a party that were evidently attached to each other: but it was all to no purpoſe; ſhe inſiſted on Louiſa accompanying her.

In the mean time, Auguſta requeſted Mrs. Somers would retire with her, as ſhe wiſhed to have a few minutes' converſation alone.

Mrs.

Mrs. Sternhold oppoſed her; but Louiſa, having heard the ſincerity of her huſband's attachment, no longer ſubmitted to control, and taking her child, attended Auguſta to another apartment.

Auguſta produced the letter which Somers had ſent, as likewiſe the one ſhe received from her father.

Louiſa peruſed them, and then exclaimed, "Ah, my God!—how have I been impoſed on!—How ſhall I ever be able to venture into his preſence!"

"Fear nothing," rejoined Auguſta; "you will find him far more inclined to forgive than you can be to aſk it. Let me hear what your intentions are."

"To fly to him this inſtant!" replied ſhe. "Had I known he deſired my company, no perſuaſion whatever ſhould have kept me from him."

"How

"How happy," reſumed Auguſta, "will your preſence make him! You ſee, by my father's letter, he does not deſire you ſhould relinquiſh your friends; his houſe will be always open to them, when they are inclined to treat him as your huſband." Auguſta then offered her protection, and promiſed to attend her to Cliffdown-lodge; at the ſame time adding, ſhe ſhould be happy to place her amongſt the number of her friends.

Louiſa thanked her for the offer, which ſhe accepted; and teſtified the pleaſure ſhe ſhould receive in her ſociety.

At this period Mrs. Sternhold, whom neither Freeman or Mrs. Seaton could pacify, entered the room.

Auguſta acquainted her with the fixed determination of Louiſa.

Mrs. Sternhold appealed to her daughter

ter for the truth of it, who anſwered in the affirmative, and requeſted that her wardrobe might be ſent to Mrs. Seaton's.

Mrs. Sternhold refuſed, and quitted the houſe, declaring that Mr. Sternhold ſhould purſue ſuch means as would put a ſtop to her journey.

Auguſta endeavoured to compoſe Louiſa, who was extremely hurt at the conduct of her mother; promiſed to ſupply her from her own wardrobe with whatever ſhe might ſtand in need of, and appointed the Thurſday following to leave London.

Mrs. Somers, in proportion as ſhe heard the virtues and amiable qualities of her huſband extolled, felt aſhamed of her paſt conduct.

She informed Auguſta there never was a total

a total want of affection for her huſband; that ſhe had been taught by her parents to lament her having married a perſon who, they alleged, took her for intereſted motives; that this, together with a variety of arguments made uſe of by them, which ſhe ſhould bluſh to mention, had ſometimes occaſioned words to drop from her which were uttered in haſte, and without a ſerious meaning; but that Mr. Somers, whoſe diſpoſition was calm, attended to them as the reſult of cool deliberation, and upon theſe words had withdrawn himſelf.

She declared her life had been a ſcene of miſery from the hour he departed, which departure, ſhe was taught to believe, originated in a diſlike he had to her ſociety.

That ſhe had heard of the great addi-

tion

tion made to his fortune; which circumſtance conſiderably increaſed her unhappineſs, as ſhe concluded it afforded a ſtrong proof reſpecting the truth of what her parents had advanced, or otherwiſe he would have demanded her; and that theſe ideas had preyed on her exiſtence, which was evident from her altered appearance.

Auguſta congratulated her on her approaching happineſs; and won by the contrition ſhe manifeſted for her neglect of Somers, as likewiſe by her appearance, which evidently teſtified what her ſufferings muſt have been, no longer viewed her in an unfavourable light, but conſidered her as an unhappy character, who had been wickedly miſled by thoſe whoſe duty it was to have taught her differently. She ſaw that Somers and his wife were both

both objects to be pitied, both having had their peace of mind destroyed through the pride and inveteracy of the Sternholds.

Augusta having viewed Louisa in this altered light, now felt for her that friendship which before she merely offered; she looked forward with anxiety and pleasure to the moment when she should, by restoring her to her husband, complete her happiness, as likewise the felicity of Somers, who so justly merited her esteem.

On the following morning, as they were sitting at breakfast, a servant entered, and informed them that Mr. Sternhold would be happy to speak with his daughter.

Mrs. Somers rose, for the purpose of hastening to her father; but was prevented by Mrs. Seaton, who desired the servant

vant to ſhew him into a parlour, and ſhe would wait on him.

Mrs. Seaton followed in a few minutes, accompanied by Freeman, and finding he had come for the expreſs purpoſe, if poſſible, of taking her back with him, Freeman acquainted him that ſhe had ſet off early in the morning for the country, and that he had better apply to Mr. Somers for her, under whoſe protection ſhe would be by the following day.

Sternhold appeared diſconcerted on the receipt of this intelligence, and aſked who accompanied her.

Freeman replied, ſhe was accompanied by his couſin Auguſta.

Sternhold, having learnt theſe particulars, retired, with a firm determination of following her; thinking, if ſhe ſhould ſleep upon the road, as he was led to conclude

conclude ſhe would by the information he had received, that he ſhould probably overtake her before ſhe reached her huſband, and prevail on her to return with him.

Freeman, ſuſpecting his intentions, reſolved on taking a different road, through Oxford and Malmſbury, inſtead of Reading and Marlborough, by which means he ſhould avoid him.

Mrs. Seaton ordered her poſt-coach to be got in readineſs early in the morning, that they might not be neceſſitated to part with Freeman's ſociety; but late in the evening he having gained intelligence of Clariſſa, and likewiſe his father having arrived at Mrs. Seaton's, he was neceſſitated to poſtpone his journey.

Louiſa, who was anxious to ſee her huſband, did not permit this circumſtance to

to have any weight, and therefore left town at the appointed time, accompanied by Auguſta.

I ſhall now leave them to purſue their journey, and likewiſe Freeman to follow Clariſſa, while I attend to what was paſſing at Cliffdown-lodge.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

ON the following morning after the arrival of Bridport and his daughter, Somers waited on Sir Charles to ſolicit him in their behalf.

He repreſented the ſufferings of Bridport in their true light, and was able to prevail on him to promiſe the ſame farm which he before occupied, as it had not been diſpoſed of.

"As to the daughter," ſaid Sir Charles, "I think we can make Sir Thomas allow her ſomething handſome; four or five hundred pounds will be a pretty fortune: ſhe may with that, as ſhe poſſeſſes a large ſhare of beauty, meet with ſome reput-

able young farmer, with whom ſhe may live tolerably happy.

" Theſe things, you know," continued he, " happen every day."

" Sir Charles," reſumed Somers, interrupting him, " I muſt particularly requeſt you will leave this affair to my management. If you mean to aſſiſt the father with the farm, I muſt not have it clogged with any conditions reſpecting the daughter.

" Sir Thomas ſhall come to ſome ſettlement with me concerning her."

" Why," cried Sir Charles, " what do you want him to do? Is it not ſufficient if he give her enough to procure a good huſband?"

" If that," reſumed Somers, " could reſtore her to happineſs, I ſhould be content with it; but I am of opinion Sophia

Bridport

Bridport has an unalterable attachment for him: how, then, do you think it poſſible ſhe can conſent to marry another?"

"You do not imagine, I hope," cried Sir Charles, "that Sir Thomas will be prevailed upon to marry her?"

"I do not mean to force him," replied Somers, "becauſe I am ſatisfied, in contracts of that nature, no force ſhould be uſed; otherwiſe I certainly would compel him: and, if he refuſed, I would aſſiſt Bridport with money to proſecute him. But ſuch is not my intention, unleſs he object to my propoſals, which are theſe: As you have promiſed Bridport the farm, Sir Thomas ſhall furniſh him with ſtock and implements the ſame as he poſſeſſed prior to his ſeizing on his property; and as he has deſtroyed the happineſs of his daughter, and put it out of her power to

marry, he ſhall ſettle upon her an annuity of one hundred and fifty pounds per annum. When he reflects upon the ruin he has brought on that family, I think he cannot refuſe the condition. If he ſhould, he muſt, and ſhall, take the conſequences."

"Give me leave to ſay," returned Sir Charles, "that this conduct of yours differs materially from your general practice. I have hitherto obſerved, you have always pleaded ſomething in mitigation of the offender, that he might thereby eſcape puniſhment: with reſpect to Sir Thomas, you plead nothing in palliation, but ſeem actuated by a motive of revenge."

"You are wrong," replied Somers. "If I were actuated by revenge, I have ample means in my power: on the contrary,

contrary, what is it I aſk of him, but to replace Bridport in the farm? Can this, or a trifling annuity (which he would gladly ſettle on her if ſhe would live with him), injure materially his fortune? or can this trifling compenſation make them amends for the irretrievable miſery he has occaſioned?

"If I were to commence a proſecution againſt him, he would forfeit half his fortune to get rid of it. View it in this light, and you will think differently. The characters I have generally pleaded for, have not had the means of making the moſt trivial compenſation to the injured party; if they had, and refuſed ſo to do, you would not have ſeen me as their petitioner.

"I am afraid," continued Somers,

" you plead in his behalf with the idea of his ſhortly being allied to your family; but that, I am confident, will never take place: and you muſt pardon me when I ſay, I do not think you ought to promote it, after what you have heard, and know to be true."

" Sir Thomas," rejoined Sir Charles, " has certainly mentioned ſuch a circumſtance to me, and I could have been more happy, if he were leſs deſerving of cenſure; but if he ſhould make the compenſation you propoſe, the evil will be partly done away, and then I do not ſee what objection I ought to have. He has been guilty of a few faſhionable follies; and where am I to find the man that has not? As to your being confident it never will take take place, I am aware you fix your opinion

opinion from what my daughter has advanced; but ſhe ſhall find I am not to be thwarted."

At this juncture a letter arrived from Mrs. Seaton, which acquainted him with the refuſal of Auguſta to Sir Thomas, and of his determination never again to trouble her.

Mrs. Seaton farther obſerved, that Sir Thomas was not in the leaſt hurt by the refuſal, but appeared happy it had afforded him an opportunity of relinquiſhing his pretenſions; and added, that ſomething certainly affected his ſpirits, which Auguſta concluded muſt be the loſs of Clariſſa or Miſs Bridport, whom he was moſt probably gone in purſuit of, as he left town the ſame day.

Sir Charles gave the letter into the hand of Somers, obſerving, if his ſiſter's

ſuſpicions were really true, Sir Thomas was a worthleſs character, and had uſed him unlike a gentleman.

Somers read the letter: "Well, ſir," ſaid he, "I hope you now are ſatisfied; you will approve of my plan reſpecting him."

"I not only approve of it," replied Sir Charles, "but will forward it as far as lays in my power; and when I ſeriouſly conſider the injury he has done to Bridport's family, I think we ought to make him double the annuity; it may ſerve to warn him againſt ſimilar practices for the future."

Somers was not at a loſs to account for the alteration in Sir Charles's ſentiments; an alteration which would appear ſurpriſing, had he not read the contents of the letter; but he did not think proper to

to notice it, contenting himſelf with obſerving, as the puniſhment even then was by no means adequate to the offence, he ſhould think himſelf juſtified in inſiſting on it.

Somers now took his leave, and returned to his houſe, where he acquainted Bridport of the ſucceſs he had met with.

" Mr. Somers," cried Bridport, " you are unacquainted with the feelings of a father: I thank you for your application to Sir Charles; but I can take no compenſation from ſuch a villain as Sir Thomas:—no;—let the event be what it may, I will puniſh him to the utmoſt rigour of the law. Such a monſter is not fit to live."

" If we were to puniſh all thoſe who lay themſelves under the laſh of the law," reſumed Somers, " we ſhould have enough

to do. I can readily plead an excuſe for this revengeful language; but, in my opinion, there would be no excuſe were you to put it in practice.

" I am not one of thoſe," continued Somers, " who could feel a pleaſure in the death of a fellow-creature, and this muſt be the conſequence if you ſucceeded. Let me aſk, what real happineſs it would produce to you? Can it reſtore your daughter's honour?—can it reſtore peace either to her mind or yours? On the contrary, you would have moments when the blood of a fellow-creature would lay heavy on your mind. In ſuch moments it would afford but a ſmall conſolation to reflect that he deſerved it.

" Inſtead of delivering a man over to puniſhment, we ſhould endeavour to reform him, both by precept and example.

One

One man thus ſaved, reflects more honour on the human race than a hundred otherwiſe deſtroyed.

" When I conſider the many follies and atrocities men are daily guilty of, it ſhocks my heart to hear them talk of proſecution. If God were not more merciful to us than we are to each other, we ſhould have but a ſmall hope of happineſs hereafter.

" As to your eating the bread earned by your daughter's proſtitution, in that you are likewiſe wrong.

" If Sir Thomas ſhould place you in the ſituation you were before, it is no more than an act of juſtice, and what he ought to do if he had never ſeen your daughter; and as to his allowing her an annuity, what can he do leſs? She might have been happily married, and thereby have

obtained the means of exiſtence. He has by his conduct deprived her of this reſource: is it not, therefore, perfectly conſiſtent, that he ſhould make ſuch an allowance as will afford her the means?"

"I think not," replied Bridport; "it is the wages of diſhonour."

"Thus ſpeak the world in general," reſumed Somers, "but I differ with them. Suppoſe a man were, by taking away your character, to deprive you of the means of obtaining your bread; ought he not to allow you a ſufficiency, in return, to make up the loſs you had ſuſtained?"

"The compariſon is not good," replied Bridport; "and if we argue to eternity, we ſhall never agree upon it. My unhappy girl is of the ſame opinion as you; ſhe does not approve of adopting coercive means againſt Sir Thomas: but I am inclined

clined to think her motives originate in an affection ſhe ſtill has for the villain; and if I were poſitive this is really the caſe, never more would I enter into her company."

Somers endeavoured to ſoften the aſperity of Bridport by every argument he could make uſe of; but the other declared it was of no uſe, his mind, he ſaid, was made up.

On the cloſe of the following day Sir Thomas ſent in his name, and requeſted to ſpeak with Somers. He had left London upon receiving a denial from Auguſta, and proceeded to Reading, where, by minute enquiry, he had been able to trace the route of Bridport and his daughter to Cliffdown-lodge.

Somers was not in company with Bridport when the meſſage was delivered, he therefore

therefore went out, and conducted him to a private apartment.

"I understand," said Sir Thomas, "Miss Bridport is with you; can I see her? I have a proposal to make that will certainly be agreeable to her."

"Whatever proposal you intend making," replied Somers, "must first be considered by her father and myself, therefore state it."

"You appear extraordinarily cool," resumed Sir Thomas; "from whence can this originate? If I have injured Miss Bridport, I am willing to make her all the reparation in my power."

"Need you be surprised," replied Somers, "after your infamous conduct to Miss Lesley?—But you are hardened in vice; and even what you have now to propose in behalf of Sophia originates in

in fear, and not through a ſenſe of the impropriety of your conduct."

Sir Thomas appeared thoughtful. After a pauſe: "Mr. Somers," ſaid he, "I will throw myſelf upon your generoſity. I have acted highly improper, and am willing to make atonement.

"I will reſtore the father to a ſituation equal to the one I deprived him of; and as to the daughter, ſhe ſhall live with me upon the ſame terms as a wife, and ſhare my fortune. If it ſo happen that I ſhould ever marry, I will then ſettle three hundred a-year on her."

"I did not think," reſumed Somers, "you could thus deliberately have inſulted me. What part of my conduct authoriſes you to expect I will be a pimp to your private pleaſures? Can I attend

to

to ſuch a propoſal; or can I requeſt her father's conſent to his daughter's proſtitution? I am ſhocked at your depravity, independent of the inſult you offer me."

"My dear fellow," cried Sir Thomas, "pardon me; I really did not mean to give offence. What would you have me to do? Sophia cannot be injured by it; I ſhall effectually ſhield her from want. As to ſubmitting the propoſal to the old man, it is entirely out of the queſtion; he will certainly wink at what he cannot publicly approve."

"Well, ſir," reſumed Somers, "I will undertake that your propoſal ſhall be accepted, ſo far as relates to the father; but you muſt ſettle three hundred a-year on the daughter, and never ſee her more."

Sir Thomas laughed: "You are certainly

tainly mad," cried he; "or you think I have taken leave of my ſenſes. I poſitively will agree to nothing till I have her back again."

"Then, ſir," reſumed Somers, "you muſt take the conſequences."

"And what are theſe?" cried Sir Thomas.

"A proſecution," replied Somers, "for the infamous method you adopted reſpecting her."

"By Heaven!" rejoined Sir Thomas, "if I thought her capable of ſuch a tranſaction, ſhe ſhould do it, and I would expend the laſt ſhilling of my fortune to defend myſelf. She knows little of me, if ſhe ſuppoſes I will be forced to any thing."

"I do not ſay," reſumed Somers, "that ſhe would approve of ſuch a procedure:

cedure: I am afraid ſhe has not yet been able to do away the regard ſhe has ſo long had for you: but in this caſe ſhe muſt ſubmit to the will of her father."

"If you think," rejoined Sir Thomas, "ſhe has ſtill an affection for me, why not reſtore her? But, to put it out of your power to ſay another word, and to convince you of the impropriety of your conduct, I will ſhew you a few lines ſhe left for me."

He then produced the paper, and the ſong left on the piano; which Somers read.

"This does indeed convince me," cried Somers; "but not as you would wiſh it. It makes you appear in a far worſe light than before. You have injured a worthy girl, who loves you to diſtraction, notwithſtanding your ill treatment;

ment; but this I partly knew from her own confeſſion."

"You did!" reſumed Sir Thomas: "ſhe is wondrous kind to make you her confidant; and I do not doubt but you will find her grateful. You are a happy fellow, to have always one fine girl or other under your protection. I ſuppoſe you will be taking her to your temple of Solitude: a very convenient ſpot! and in the arms of one, you may learn to forget another."

"Your inſolence," replied Somers, "is intolerable; and as I cannot ſubmit to a repetition of it, I will ſend her father to you: he is the moſt proper perſon to anſwer you on the ſubject."

Sir Thomas caught hold of his arm: "Pray excuſe me," ſaid he; "I am half mad!—What ſhall I do?—I cannot exiſt without

without her!—Positively, I will double the annuity, if that will content her!—Never, till I lost her, did I know the value of her."

Somers appeared surprised: "What is the meaning of this!" said he; "whence originates this sentiment! Is it possible you have a serious affection for her?"

"Believe me, Somers," cried Sir Thomas, "my heart and soul is wrapt up in her; therefore, tell me the terms, and I will agree to them."

"Marry her," replied Somers; "for on no other condition will I surrender her to you."

"Marry her!" exclaimed Sir Thomas; "you certainly are not serious. What, marry a farmer's daughter, after she has lived with me in a certain capacity!"

"Marry the object that you love," resumed

ſumed Somers: "her living with you was your fault, not hers; and if it reflect diſgrace on you, it muſt be your puniſhment; for on no other terms will I reſtore her, and therefore I wiſh you a good morning;" at the ſame time ringing the bell, and deſiring a ſervant to attend him out.

"Will you attend to reaſon?" cried Sir Thomas.

"I have told you my determination," replied Somers," and can add nothing further."

"Then," before I ſubmit," reſumed Sir Thomas, "I will ſuffer myſelf to be cut in pieces."

Sir Thomas now left the houſe, and Somers returned to Bridport with evident diſcompoſure; but did not think proper

proper to relate the buſineſs he had been upon.

At this juncture Theodore arrived, in a ſtate of the utmoſt anxiety, on account of the ſingular adventure he had met with in London; and greatly oppreſſed in his mind at the recollection of the intelligence he had received of Auguſta's being the perſon who had lodged the information againſt him.

He had no knowledge of Mrs. Seaton, nor of St. Aubin being acquainted with her, and therefore was unable to draw any other concluſion than that ſhe had been to Mr. Quibble's, and by him referred to St. Aubin.

This ſuppoſed conduct of Auguſta leſſened her materially in his eſtimation: and when he recollected the apparent anxiety ſhe had profeſſed for his welfare, by

by warning him againſt meeting Freeman, who vowed to be revenged on him for his ſuppoſed miſconduct reſpecting Clariſſa; but which he now concluded was on Freeman's account, leſt he ſhould ſuſtain an injury by the meeting; he looked upon her as a complication of cruelty and deception, and unworthy of that affection which he entertained for her perſon.

It was late in the evening when Theodore arrived at Cliffdown-lodge. He knew the way through the garden, and therefore walked till he reached the door, and having knocked, he requeſted the ſervant to inform him if her maſter was alone.

The ſervant replied, he had a lady and gentleman with him.

" Then

" Then ſay to him," reſumed Theodore, " a gentleman would be glad to ſpeak with him."

The ſervant went to her maſter, and delivered the meſſage.

" What gentleman?" cried Somers, rather warm: " is it the gentleman that was here before?"

The ſervant replied in the affirmative.

" Then tell him," reſumed Somers, " I am engaged, and cannot now attend to him."

The ſervant returned with the anſwer, which greatly diſconcerted him; he therefore requeſted pen, ink, and paper, and ſitting down, wrote a few lines to Somers, returning him thanks for his former kindneſs; expreſſed his ſorrow that he ſhould experience a conduct ſo reverſe to what

he

he had hitherto met with from him; but concluded it muſt have ariſen from ſome miſrepreſentation, that time alone would do away.

In this note he encloſed twenty pounds, the amount of what Somers had aſſiſted him with; and having left five guineas with the ſervant, deſired ſhe would convey the note to her maſter, and then walked towards the poſt-chaiſe.

The ſervant immediately delivered the note, which Somers read with evident ſurpriſe, and turning to the maid, haſtily enquired where Theodore was.

"Gone," replied the ſervant.

Somers ſtarted from his ſeat, overturned his chair, and reached the chaiſe on the moment it was ſetting off.

"Heavens! Theodore?" cried Somers,

" what muſt you have thought on receiving ſuch a meſſage from me? I really imagined it was Sir Thomas."

Theodore found there had been an error, and immediately alighted from his chaiſe, while Somers preſſed his hand with a pleaſure that ſhewed how happy he felt on meeting him again. Then taking him into a private room, acquainted him with the company he had in his houſe, as likewiſe the occurrences that had happened during his abſence, together with his anxiety on his account.

Theodore, in return, related his journey to and from London, and the ſingular adventure which obliged him to quit it; concluding with ſome ſevere remarks on the conduct of Auguſta; which Somers

mers endeavoured to do away, by relating a part of what paſſed between them after Theodore had quitted the place.

But neither this, nor any thing Somers could advance, was able to obliterate it from his memory.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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